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HENRY OF NAVARRE

A ROMANTIC PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

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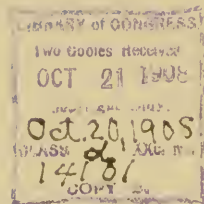
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CAST.

CHARLES IX.	<i>King of France</i>
HENRY DE BOURBON	<i>King of Navarre, after King of France</i>
HENRY	<i>Duc de Guise</i>
HENRY	<i>Duc d'Anjou</i>
ARTHUR DE MOUHY	<i>A Huguenot Leader</i>
COSMO RUGGIERI	<i>An Astrologer</i>
THE DUC DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD	<i>A Huguenot</i>
MARSHAL DE TAVANNES	<i>A Catholic</i>
THE DUC DE BIRAGUES	<i>A Catholic</i>
THE DUC DE RETZ	<i>A Catholic</i>
M. DE BESME	<i>A Catholic</i>
CATHERINE DE' MEDICI	<i>The Queen-Mother</i>
MARGUERITE DE VALOIS	
MARIE BELLEFORET	
CHARLOTTE DE SAUVÉ	
LA BELLE DAYOLE	
MADemoisELLE DE TORIGNY	
MADemoisELLE DE MONTMORENCI	<i>La Belle Fosseuse</i>

HENRY OF NAVARRE.

ACT I.

Royal apartments in the Louvre. Rich tapestry hangings. Window from which can be heard murmurs of Paris. Door L. Door hidden by tapestry at back. Chairs with Royal arms, etc. Servants cross with rich stuffs, etc.

Enter DUKE DE LA ROCHEFOUCAULD and GENTLEMEN.

Roche. [Airily with the tone of an exquisite.] Ah, Des Valles, preparing for the mask to-night? I hear you are going to surpass yourself.

Enter ARTHUR DE MOUHY. He is a tall, dark, gloomy, religious, sombre man who has only two ideas, the Religion and Henry of Navarre.

Roche. Welcome, De Mouhy, welcome to the Louvre. I have not seen you since Moncontour, when you were wounded. Things have changed. Then we were crushed to the ground, and hope itself had vanished. Now the Huguenots are in favour again. The King surrounds himself with us, he is unhappy when we are away. But why this dull suit, man? you come to a wedding, not to a funeral. You will disgrace us with Catherine's fair ladies, the famous Flying Squadron.

De M. I wear black like my master. You are

gay, M. Rochefoucauld, but Henry of Navarre has not forgot that but two months back his mother was poisoned in this palace.

Roche. Tales, De Mouhy, tales. Let but a prince die suddenly, and Cosmo Ruggieri has put a poison in his wine, or his gloves are poisoned. Wear a bright face, man. I tell you the King loves us, as he fears the Guise. Has he not given his sister Marguerite, the most learned lady in France, to our young leader, the Bearnais Prince, Henry of Navarre? Get a new suit, man, and prepare you for the wedding.

De M. I will, I'll sharpen my sword, for the favours will be crimson.

Enter PAGE.

Page. Monsieur, the Duc de Guise.

Enter GUISE with DE BESME.

Roche. Ah, M. de Guise! Do you dance in the mask to-night? The King and his brothers Anjou and Alençon defend the gates of Paradise, which are rudely assaulted by Henry of Navarre, Condé, and myself. Their skill renders the gates impregnable. Then the King of his great generosity grants us admittance. A pretty allegory, M. de Guise, showing that where arms fail love prevails, and Henry gains Paradise indeed in the arms of the most lovely lady, Marguerite of Valois. I must prepare my costume for to-night, the hour flies. Will you come, De Mouhy?

[Exeunt DE ROCHEFOUCAULD and DE MOUHY.]

Guise. *[To BESME.]* Fools! I wonder if we could ever be so blind and dance while death danced with us.

De B. When is it to be?

Guise. To-night if the King but agrees. This mar-

riage has drawn them all together. Paris is one big net. To-morrow if the King wishes it there will not be a Huguenot alive in Paris.

Enter PAGE.

Page. The Queen-Mother, the Duc d'Anjou.

Enter CATHERINE DE' MEDICI and two ladies, who arrange her dress and then retire. ANJOU who has entered with her stands at her side. DE BESME stands at the door.

Guise. Madame, my felicitations. At last our plans are crowned with success. For nine years I have waited for this hour. Nine years ago my father, the Balafré, lay dead at Orleans, this dagger at his side. [*Draws dagger.*] I have sworn that it shall rust in Coligny's blood, and that I shall exterminate the Huguenots as I would the heathen. I was but a boy then; I have grown since, and my hate has grown with me.

Cath. Everything is prepared, there can be no mistake?

Guise. Impossible. The Catholics are armed. Marcel, the provost of Paris, will lead them himself.

Anjou. [*An affected perfumed youth.*] My gentlemen are ready, and the Swiss Guard.

Guise. And all who have not the white cross in their hat, the white band on their arms, must die.

Cath. It is wonderful that they suspect nothing. An Italian would not be duped so easily.

Guise. Coligny dreams of nothing but of winning glory in Flanders. Henry of Navarre, the Bearnais, is a loutish country lad, King on suffrance, bred on garlic and mountain air, content to eat and hunt, drink and make love.

Cath. Yet is it he of whom I am afraid. Cosmo Ruggieri says he will be King.

Guise. A conjurer's tale!

Cath. His father foretold my husband's death. The court laughed at him, but all the world knows that Henry Second fell to Montgomery's lance.

Guise. The best way to cheat a prophecy is to fulfill it. Crown his dead head like the Welch prince of old.

Cath. If all the others live, I swear that he shall die. Year after year I have fought with foes at home, and foes abroad, played one against the other, smiled with my heart on fire, flattered when I might not strike. I have seen another woman by my husband's side and heard him sing her praises. I have endured all, all, that my sons should reign. I have kept France a kingdom, when her princes would have dismembered her. I have saved the crown, for whom? For Henry of Navarre? Never! O that I were a man! I would strangle him with my own hands.

Guise. Have no fear, Madame, he will not escape.

Enter PAGE.

Page. The Princess Marguerite.

Enter MARGUERITE with MARIE BELLEFORET. MARGUERITE is a tall, stately, gracious woman, and MARIE is short and slight and girlish, with a little piquant face and bright manners.

Mar. [*Anxiously.*] He has come, you have seen him?

Cath. The King of Navarre?

Mar. Has he arrived?

Guise. Yes, the Bearnais is here.

Cath. And in a few moments he will wait on you.

Mar. Then my last hope has gone. I have hoped and hoped he would not come. I heard that he had started on his journey, but still I prayed something might turn him back.

Cath. [*Suspiciously, thinking of massacre.*] Why, what should turn him back?

Guise. [*Also suspiciously.*] Has not the King given his word for his safety in Paris?

Mar. I was not thinking of his safety. The Bearnais has been bred a mountaineer. He is rude and coarse, but he is no coward.

Cath. He is simple. You need not fear Margot. The moment he sees you he will be at your feet. But you must robe yourself, child, to meet him.

Mar. Not for a king of peasants. He would not know a silk farthingale from a cotton gown. Mother, I will not marry this Bearnais, no, not for you, not for my brother Charles. It is unnatural for a Catholic to marry a Huguenot.

Cath. The King has sent to Rome for a dispensation; you need have no fear.

Mar. I love the court, my poets, and my music; he cares for nothing but hunting and his dinner. Besides, I hate him, Mother.

Guise. Princess, you have never seen him.

Mar. I met him at Blois.

Cath. That is years ago when you were children, too long for you to remember him.

Mar. But I do. He boxed my ears, I've never forgotten it. I ate his sweets, he called me greedy, and then I pulled his hair.

Guise. He's a man now and will be like every other man—at your feet.

Mar. [*Musing.*] I wonder. He had a nose and

chin even then. He was not a man to let a woman rule him. But I will not marry him. I will not be sacrificed to a heretic, to a Gascon.

Cath. Your brother Charles is set on it. Be careful how you thwart him. His mad fits grow on him until I tremble for myself. [*Goes up to window.*] I can do nothing.

Mar. [*Turning to GUISE.*] My own mother is against me. M. de Guise, you are the foremost Catholic in France. Can you not save me from this outrage?

Guise. There is one way, but it is desperate.

Mar. Surely danger will not stop the Duc de Guise.

Guise. If the reward be great enough, if the prize be worth winning. [*Speaking low and rapidly.*] My uncle the Cardinal is all-powerful in Rome. If I stop the dispensation may I hope—may I hope that the most beautiful woman [*taking her hand*], the most beautiful woman in France will not be cruel to me?

Mar. [*Coldly withdrawing hand.*] M. le Duc! [*He turns away, she stops him with a gesture.*] Oh, M. de Guise, stop the dispensation and my gratitude shall end only with my life.

Guise. [*Passionately.*] Will it be only—gratitude?

Mar. [*Haughtily.*] M. de Guise! You forget, I am a princess of France.

Enter PAGE.

Page. His Majesty, the King.

Enter CHARLES, TAVANNES, DE RETZ, and BIRAGUES and other gentlemen. CHARLES is in high spirits.

Charles. Ha, ha! now I have the wolf by the ears.

It was an excellent idea this marriage ; confess, Mother, did I not play the part well?

Cath. [*Warning him.*] Ssh! Margot, you may retire.

Mar. [*Going to the door, suddenly returns and confronts her brother.*] Sire, Sire, must this marriage take place? You will not permit this outrage.

Charles. Outrage! outrage! Harry's a good fellow and [*looking at ANJOU*] not always scheming for riches or for power. I like Harry. He is fond of the chase too.

Mar. He is a Huguenot.

Guise. And the dispensation has not yet arrived.

Charles. You, too, against me, Guise, with Anjou? what mischief are you plotting? Get you gone, girl, and prepare to receive your lover.

Mar. But Sire——

Charles. S'death! Did you not hear me? My only bad subjects are in my own family. Get you gone. [*MARGOT retires slowly.*]

Guise. I leave your Majesty to—your Huguenots. When your Majesty has need of your loyal Catholics the Guise shall be the first to join you.

[*GUISE bows low and retires with DE BESME.*]

Cath. [*Going to CHARLES, lays her hand on his arm.*] You are imprudent, my son. You fawn on these heretics until even I know not if you are sincere. You relent?

Charles. [*Throwing off his mother's hand.*] Relent! God's death, mother! have I forgot my ride in Gascony—the desolation, the bare monasteries, the broken altars, the mutilated saints? I even saw a dog, a mongrel, with a rosary for a collar. A godless land

where not a mass was heard from morn to night. It chilled me to the heart.

Tav. The time has come for vengeance. Paris is prepared. You have but to say the word and the Huguenots will be exterminated.

Charles. [*Half to himself.*] Dead, all dead. I like Harry and Rochefoucauld, and they would be dead.

Cath. You consent, my son?

Charles. Wait, wait until the marriage has disarmed them. [*Cunningly.*] Beside, mother, if I cut down Navarre the Guise will grow too tall. Come, Tavannes, they worry me with statecraft. I'll work in the smithy until dinner. [*As he reaches door, turns.*] Anjou, you are heir to the crown, you can look after Harry. [*Looks at ANJOU, chuckling.* ANJOU at the word "smithy" puts his handkerchief to his nose. CHARLES, seeing the action, snatches it and smelling it throws it angrily away.] Faugh! You smell like Ruggieri's perfumery. I'll to my horses.

[*Laughs and exits.*]

Cath. [*Looking after CHARLES.*] Blind! Blind! He will not see. The stars have said it, the Bearnais shall reign. [*Fiercely.*] But he shall not. Ruggieri will help me. I would go to the rack willingly if I knew the Bearnais were dead.

Enter RUGGIERI, stands motionless.

Cath. [*Sees RUGGIERI.*] Ruggieri, have you recast the horoscope?

Rug. As you did direct. It is as my father said. Three sons of Catherine shall reign and after that the Bearnais.

Cath. Always the same! Navarre, the Bearnais. Did you consult the omens?

Rug. As you commanded. Always the three cries symbolic of three deaths.

Cath. Charles, Anjou, and Alençon, always the same. But there's still the mirror, Ruggieri.

Rug. It would tell the same tale, my art cannot lie.

Cath. You could show us the Bearnais in the mirror crowned and King of France. [*To ANJOU.*] I have it. Ruggieri, you shall show your power before the King and the whole court. [*To ANJOU, triumphantly.*] The Bearnais crowned! Charles will go mad and kill him where he stands.

Anjou. He would kill me, his own brother, if he thought I coveted the crown. We have the fox at last, mother. Farewell. I must meet de Guise and practice my dance this evening. [*Exit ANJOU.*]

Cath. [*To RUGGIERI.*] You have the—the other things I spoke of? [*RUGGIERI silently hands a phial.*] You have made a mistake, the phial is empty.

Rug. There is enough to kill ten men in that small phial, and yet it is invisible to sight as it is to taste.

Cath. Navarre shall drink it in the rarest vinatge. Ay, and his bride shall hand it to him.

Rug. If this should fail, there are subtler things, the smoke——

Cath. The smoke?

Rug. [*Gives her powder.*] Throw this powder on the fire, and within ten minutes every living thing in the room will be dead. Ten minutes more the smoke will have vanished and only death will remain.

Cath. I like it well. The winecup and the perfumed glove are left behind, but the smoke vanishes. You are a genius, Ruggieri, yet no man loves you. Even the King fears you, and Henry of Navarre has

sworn your death. Men say that you killed his mother with a pair of perfumed gloves.

Rug. [*Bowing.*] Which your Majesty presented to her.

Cath. Ah, have no fear, Ruggieri, for I still need you, but avoid the Bearnais.

Enter MARGOT and MARIE.

My daughter must suspect nothing, come.

[They go behind tapestry and disappear through private door.]

Mar. Marie, what shall I do. Charles forgets he is my brother and remembers only he is the King.

Marie. Have comfort, Madame; the King of Navarre may not be so bad. He fought bravely at Jarnac and Moncontour.

Mar. He was born with teeth in his mouth and bit his nurses. A Gascon, a savage. At his birth his grandfather put a clove of garlic between his lips, and weaned him on Cahors wine. He can hunt and fight; I doubt if he can read.

Marie. They say the Gascons are most ardent lovers.

Mar. I doubt he will not lack for compliments, but I know them all by heart. Oh, if I could only meet a man.

Marie. There are many at court.

Mar. They love the princess, not the woman. Once for a moment——

Marie. Once——

Mar. [*Dreamily.*] I was leaning from my casement watching the crowd below. The sunshine flooded the street and warmed my blood. I laughed, Marie, laughed with the joy of living. Then from the

crowd below two eyes shone into mine. My cheek warmed, I turned my face away. [*Pause.*] I looked again, they had gone. But always when I dream these eyes, like two stars, look at up me again, and I know somewhere, somehow there lives a man who loves me, even if I were the lowliest born in France. [*Sighing.*] That is when I dream, Marie.

Marie. The King of Navarre is a man. They say he will march until his men drop and then order music and dance alone.

Mar. I hope he may dance alone. He may be a great marcher, but he seems in no hurry to visit me.

Marie. He is playing tennis with M. de Mouhy.

Mar. Playing tennis with M. de Mouhy! They told me he was robing to meet me.

Marie. He had on a black riding habit; I caught a glimpse of him.

Mar. A black riding habit!

Enter PAGE.

Page. The King of Navarre waits upon her Highness's pleasure.

Mar. Tell the King I will receive him here.

[Exit PAGE.]

Mar. [*To MARIE.*] In ten mintues.

Marie. Ten minutes!

Mar. In ten minutes, and then mayhap he'll have to wait. So he plays tennis while I wait for him. I'll teach this Gascon gentleman a lesson. He wears plain black when he comes a-courting, thinks only of his mother when he woos a wife. I shall be back shortly, Marie. You can entertain this budding Amadis!

Marie. But, Madame, where are you going?

Mar. I'm going to change my dress. [*Going to door.*]

[MARGOT exits through door in tapestry.]

Enter PAGE.

Page. King Henry of Navarre!

Enter HENRY in an old rusty black riding habit with
DE MOUHY. He enters with a flourish, after a
quick look at tapestry, knowing that MARGOT has
just left. He seizes MARIE's hand and kisses it.

Henry. Your devoted servant, fair mistress.

Marie. Your Majesty, Sire, I'm not the Princess.

Henry. [*Glancing at tapestry.*] I'll not believe
it: was I not told the fairest maid in France—come,
kiss me, sweetheart.

Marie. The Princess will join you shortly, Sire.

Henry. [*Loudly.*] She need not hurry when she
leaves so fair a substitute. What is your name, child?

Marie. Marie Bell foret.

Henry. A very pretty name too, Marie. I christen
it. [*Kisses her on lips.*]

Marie. Oh, Sire, you must not.

Henry. What! are my lips so rough, or is kissing
out of fashion?

Marie. Sire, it is wrong.

Henry. Never you believe it, Marie, unless I tell
you so. I have tried it and I know.

Marie. Sire, you are a Huguenot.

Henry. There is no heresy in love, Marie, unless
it is to be old and ugly. [*Goes to kiss her again, but
she restrains him by placing her hand over his mouth.*]

Marie. [*Smiling.*] Must I tell your Majesty he
is ugly?

Henry. A hit, Marie, a hit! But spare me the

truth. It is almost the only thing in which the court remembers I am a king. There, I'll not kiss you, Marie.

Marie. And I'll not say your Majesty is ugly. Your Highness saved me a falsehood from confession when I meet Father Manson.

Henry. You flatter, child; must you confess the kiss?

Marie. Nay, that is on your Majesty's conscience.

Henry. Mordieu, Marie, I thought it was on your lips.

Marie. Sire, your generosity has already forgotten it.

Henry. As you will, Marie. I've forgotten it, though, faith, I'd like to refresh my memory. [*Goes toward her, she backs away holding back her hands to keep him off.*] What a prim little rosebud to find at court among the famous Flying Squadron. If your mistress had but your modesty and half your wit I had not been so long a-coming. What is she doing, Marie?

Marie. She is attiring herself, Sire.

Henry. [*Makes gesture of skirts about himself.*] We poor countrymen are to be dazzled.

Marie. The Princess has lovely dresses, Sire.

Henry. Devil a kiss I'll get from her, De Mouhy—her robe will take half the room.

[*MARIE curtsies and exits.*

[*All this time DE MOUHY has stood in the background gazing in silent admiration at MARIE, in half indignation at his master. He now comes forward.*

De M. Is this wise, Sire?

Henry. Is what wise, De Mouhy?

De M. We are surrounded by enemies. Our lives hang on a thread. Will you force the Princess into their ranks?

Henry. Mordieu, I came to marry her.

De M. And you start by kissing her maid.

Henry. And a very good start, too. She's pretty; would n't you have kissed her too, De Mouhy?

De M. You mistake her for the mistress.

Henry. Mistake! Nonsense, man. The Princess kept us waiting to flout us. Mistake! I know her every feature. What thought you of our reception?

De M. The King was gracious and the courtiers smiled.

Henry. But Paris, our good Paris, would have torn us to pieces. You heard their song. [*Sings a snatch of the song.*] "Every street shall be a grave." [*Makes gesture of cutting throat.*] A word from Cousin Charles would cut our throats. Do you think I am fooled? No. Charles would massacre us all to-morrow but that it would make the Guise all-powerful. He hates the Huguenots, but he fears the Guise.

De M. Then why trust yourself here? why not stay in Bearn?

Henry. A man can die but once, and there are precipices in Bearn. I came here because I love the danger, to pit my head against Catherine's, and to be frank, De Mouhy, I am in love.

De M. In love! And you come to marry Marguerite.

Henry. Because, my dear old slow-head, I am in love with Marguerite.

De M. You've never seen her since she was a child at Blois.

Henry. When she pulled my hair! [*Laughs.*]

Mordieu! She had spirit and beauty even then, for all she was a girl all arms and legs. She has blossomed since. François Clouet sent me her picture. I used to look at it for hours, until the eyes grew soft and the blush reddened on the cheek. But it could n't speak, De Mouhy, so I went all the way from Gascony to hear her voice.

De M. You went all the way from Gascony?

Henry. Yes, and I was missing for a month. They said I was gone hunting. I went to Paris. I saw her for just one minute, De Mouhy, the sunlight in her hair, the shadow deep in her eyes, and I heard her laugh, De Mouhy, just once, that was all.

De M. You love her!

Henry. In the morning and in the evening, when I wake and when I sleep.

De M. She is a Valois.

Henry. I know, but though Charles is a madman, Anjou a fop, and Alençon a weakling, Marguerite is a Marguerite indeed, a white star with a heart of gold.

De M. And you woo her in an old riding habit and start by keeping her waiting.

Henry. Ventre St. Gris! De Mouhy, you're all right in a battle, but heaven help you as a cavalier. She has been pampered and surfeited by praises. Is she to be won by compliment? No, no, she thinks us Gascons savages. I humour her.

De M. The maid will tell her you kissed her.

Henry. I meant her to, she saw it.

De M. Saw it!

Henry. Yes, she forgets that in the mountains we have the ears of a fox and the eyes of an eagle. I saw the tapestry rustle, I caught the glimpse of a face, my heart beat quickly, and I kissed Marie.

De M. Jealousy is not love, Sire.

Henry. No, but it comes either before or after. I'm afraid, De Mouhy, you are so serious, in your case it will come after.

De M. My wife will have no cause for jealousy. [*Stiffly.*]

Henry. No, man, it is *you* who will be jealous.

De M. I don't understand women, but I should n't insult my mistress by wooing her in mourning in my oldest raiment.

Henry. [*Takes off his hat and looks at it, passing finger through broken rim.*] The hat is somewhat rusty and the rim a trifle broken. I doffed it so often as we rode through Paris—there was a saint at every corner.

De M. Your subjects would have grieved for you. It is a sin for a Huguenot to uncover before a graven image.

Henry. It is a greater sin for a Gascon to uncover before a lady even though she be a saint. St. Agnes, St. Catherine, St. Genevieve [*Throws a kiss*—I love them all, and, ventre St. Gris, when I passed St. Anthony I looked the other way. Mordieu, the Princess keeps us waiting: shall we get back to tennis, De Mouhy?

De M. If we were wise we should go to Bearn. You can see the avalanche and the landslip, in Paris the peril is hidden.

Henry. You are a cheerful companion, De Mouhy, you'll become popular in Paris—at funerals. It is well we are alone. [*RUGGIERI steps from tapestry.*]

Rug. A king should know that in a palace one is never alone.

De M. [*Hand on sword.*] Are you a friend?

Henry. Who are you?

Rug. Cosmo Ruggieri.

Henry. [*Drawing sword, DE MOUHY also.*] The Queen's poisoner!

Rug. The Queen's perfumer would sound better.

Henry. The Queen's executioner.

Rug. If you will have it so.

Henry. Are you mad to venture here like this? Do you not know that I have sworn your death?

Rug. Yes, but you will not kill me. You are young, you love, and you wish to live. [*Folds his arms.*] I am alone, Sire, I am unarmed, and all men hate me. Strike me if you will, but when you kill me your own doom is sealed.

Henry. My dead mother's soul calls out for vengeance.

Rug. You wrong me, Sire, I did not kill your mother. It is said I sent your mother death in a pair of perfumed gloves.

Henry. Ay, she died within the week.

Rug. It is false. Jeanne d'Albret would not wear gloves with perfume, it was an abomination to her. It was like incense, a thing accursed.

Henry. That is true, De Mouhy.

Rug. Look from this window, Sire. You see the river sparkling in the sun? Its exhalations cause more death each year than poison in an age. Did she herself not write and warn you against Paris?

Henry. That is so, but how came you to know it?

Rug. It was I who told you Paris was bad for you, but I was not thinking of your health.

Henry. [*Puts up sword.*] Why do you tell me this? What do you here with the King of Navarre? you that serve the Medici?

Rug. I serve the stars whose messenger I am. Night after night I watch their quiet faces and read their distant secrets. Catholic or Huguenot—differences of the day; the silent stars care not, what they write remains.

Henry. [*Interested in spite of himself.*] What have they writ?

Rug. One thing they spell clearly. The Bearnais shall be King. Three sons of Catherine, and then Navarre. François is dead. Charles reigns now, then Anjou, then you. You will be King.

Henry. King! King! Ay, so I am already. A few houses and a wilderness.

Rug. Nay you shall be a king without a peer in France, but the road is rough and broken and danger lurks by the way.

Henry. I was born on the flank of a precipice. I care not how difficult the road, how fierce the peril, if France be at the end.

Rug. Courage alone will never win the goal: you must have cunning, Sire.

Henry. Am I not a Gascon, Ruggieri?

Rug. Ay, but you fight an Italian.

Henry. Tell me what are these dangers, Ruggieri?

Rug. I see them yet but dimly, but first beware of wine.

Henry. I will, Ruggieri, I'll be rid of it as quickly as I may.

Rug. You laugh, but the cup that cheers you to-day may bring you the great silence to-morrow. Beware of fire when the sun is still warm and summer lingers.

Henry. You see that scar, Ruggieri? A burnt child. I shall not forget.

Rug. Sometimes the smoke is deadlier than the flame. And beware of the fourth Sunday in August.

Henry. I always beware of Sundays, Ruggieri; it's a dull day with us Huguenots.

Rug. Will your Majesty accept a gift from so humble a friend as the poor astrologer? [*Hands him a ring.*]

Henry. An opal. Look, De Mouhy! Ventre St. Gris! Saw you ever the like? It is alive: see, it gleams with the fire of Etna.

Rug. There's magic in it. It is blood red—place it near poison, it grows green as grass. That stone is worth a throne.

Henry. And you would part with it? You are more generous than a king.

Rug. I give it to make one, to win a king for a friend. [*Finger to lips, disappears through tapestry.*]

De M. I like it not. The Florentines, they wish to rouse your ambition. This is some snare of Catherine's to trap you.

Henry. I shall be King of France, De Mouhy, the stars have said it.

De M. And Ruggieri reads them. Who shall judge between him and them?

Henry. My own heart, De Mouhy. I feel it here [*touching breast*] and here [*touching head*]. The heart to dare and the brain to achieve.

Enter PAGE.

Page. Her Highness, the Princess Marguerite.

De M. I will leave you, Sire. I must see Taillebois, and get the latest tidings. [*Exit DE MOUHY.*]

Enter MARGUERITE and ladies of the court. MARGOT has an enormous farthingale, the others smaller

ones. MARGOT *evidently expects Henry to rush to her feet—as he did—and be overwhelmed. He is turned away, hat on, as if he did not hear her enter.*

Mar. Leave me, Marie, I'll teach the Gascon boor a lesson. [*Aloud to Henry.*] Your servant, your Majesty.

[HENRY *turns, sees farthingale, and roars with laughter. MARGOT, disconcerted, draws herself up proudly.*

You are amused, Sire; you do not laugh at us?

Henry. Mordieu! I laugh because I must. My mother laughed when I first saw the light. I was born laughing and I have laughed ever since. Ventre St. Gris, we all laugh at Nérac. When you get there, Margot, you'll laugh too.

Mar. Then I trust my brother will keep us near his person. He will not want to part with you now that he has got you.

Henry. He holds me dear and well I know it, Margot. Forgive me, cos, I laughed only because of Nérac. My poor palace is not so large as the Louvre and my doors will hardly admit [*making gesture of farthingale*] so much fashion.

Mar. [*Complacently.*] Mine is the largest farthingale in France. Tell me, are Pau and Nérac as small and wild as our courtiers say?

Henry. [*Bowing awkwardly.*] Your courtiers are jealous that Nérac is to have so fair a mistress.

Mar. [*Clapping her hands.*] A compliment! A compliment from the Bearnais!

Henry. [*Innocently.*] I was told you would like that if I said it.

Mar. Um-m-m. [*Indicating hat.*] They are not all as rude at Nérac as might appear.

Henry. [*Taking no notice of what she has said about the hat.*] Nérac is a bit wild but it is my home. It hangs on the valley, the mountains frown on it, and the keen winds keep it clean. True in the winter, when the ways are blocked with snow, the wolves howl in the streets and the bears prowl by the door But no Bearnais minds that.

Mar. [*Horrificed.*] Bears in the streets!

Henry. Sometimes only wolves. You 'll grow to laugh at it when you are a Bearnaise.

Mar. The savages!

Henry. [*With affected simplicity.*] Did you not know? I thought you knew everything in Paris, Margot most of all.

Mar. In Paris men know better than to wear a hat in the presence of a woman.

Henry. [*Laughing uproariously.*] To think I had forgotten it. In Bearn we don't wear hats at all, no, nor boots either. Bareheaded and barefooted was my training. [*Looks at boots.*] These hurt me plaguily, and give me corns. I've had a long ride, and with your permission, cos [*kicks his boots off, takes the King's chair, and sprawls*]. That's better. Don't you sit, cos, or [*gesture of farthingale*] does the fashion forbid it?

Mar. I should sit, only [*looks around*] there is no seat. In Bearn do people sit upon the floor?

Henry. Ay, some prefer it, but there's always a chair for the King, and if you please me, Margot, you shall have one too. Oh, we 'll have great days when we get back to Nérac. You shall not find it dull, Margot.

Mar. Is it so full of pleasures?

Henry. Nothing but gaiety from morn to night. Out of bed early we greet the morning sun.

Mar. Yes?

Henry. Then we hunt. Then back to breakfast: milk, biscuits, and sour cheese.

Mar. Then?

Henry. Then we hunt until dinner.

Mar. Oh, you do have dinner?

Henry. Ay [*smacking his lips*]. Cheese and garlic and a flask of Cahors wine. If we have killed aught in the chase, mordieu, we eat that too.

Mar. And—after dinner?

Henry. Why, then we hunt. No napping in the afternoons at Nérac. Then home to supper, and tired and happy we steal off to bed.

Mar. Oh. [*Pause.*] Do you nought but hunt in Gascony?

Henry. Ventre St. Gris! The men swear and the women sometimes dance.

Mar. Then I shall dance—if ever I get there—from sunset till sunrise.

Henry. Not in Bearn. From sunrise to sunset as often as you will. But candles are scarce in Bearn.

Mar. And the long winter evenings, when the night falls?

Henry. Why, then we sleep. We are simple folk, so we sleep soundly.

Mar. You are a strange suitor, cos, you do not promise much.

Henry. [*With just a serious touch in his voice.*] But I 'll give more.

Mar. Are wooers all so ardent in Bearn?

Henry. I know not, I seek my wife in Paris. [*Seriously.*] Margot, King Charles has matched us. [*Suddenly changing.*] Ventre St. Gris! 'T is he should do the wooing. [*Putting on boots.*] What say you,

cos, are we to bill and coo because he makes us wed? Let's be good comrades. Faith, I'll not hate you though you be my wife.

Mar. [*Frankly.*] Nor I you, though I hope you'll not be my husband. Tell me, cos, what think you of our Paris?

Henry. Tell me first what Paris thinks of me.

Mar. Paris is Catholic.

Henry. I answer, I am a Huguenot.

Mar. But the palaces, the churches, the hotels, are they not wonderful? And there's the court, and—and—what think you of our women?

Henry. Oh, some of them are young and most of them have arms and legs.

Mar. [*Looking at him intently.*] Come, cousin, you have eyes—are they not beautiful?

Henry. [*Looking ardently at her.*] I have seen one that is so beautiful that only Ronsard could paint her, and he not do her justice.

Mar. Ah! [*Turning away.*] What is her name?

Henry. Her name? [*Looking at Margot.*] I have forgot, she is a maid in the Palace.

Mar. A maid! How dare you, Sire!

Henry. Why, cos, what ails you? May not a maid be beautiful in Paris? Now in Bearn——

Mar. I will not hear you, I'm sick of your Bearn.

Henry. In Bearn the women have feet like—like——

Mar. [*Coquettishly showing feet.*] Like that?

Henry. [*Looks at them and forgets himself.*] Exquisite!

Mar. You think so?

Henry. [*Pulling himself together.*] They are charming. You certainly have good bootmakers in Paris.

Mar. [*Infuriated.*] Bootmakers! What think you of the foot?

Henry. I find no fault with it, but they have bigger in Bearn.

Mar. Oh, they are giants there.

Henry. Not that neither. Not one of them could fill a dress like yours.

Mar. A dress like mine! Do you take this for me? [*Gesture showing that the dress is all spring underneath.*]

Henry. And I thought it was real.

Mar. Cos, I begin to think you are a fool.

Henry. They said so in Bearn when I set out for Paris. But you shall teach me better, you that are the wisest woman in France.

Mar. You have heard something of Marguerite in your country.

Henry. Mordieu! Yes, they told me you knew so much that I was half afraid of you.

Mar. Is wisdom in a woman such a terrible thing?

Henry. I was afraid you had worn out your eyes reading.

Mar. [*Looking him fairly in the eyes.*] Are they so dull and faded, Henry?

Henry. [*Carried away.*] Mar—they—are—
[*Breathlessly.*] No wonder that the Guise worshipped you. Ronsard was right. They are—they are——

Mar. Yes?

Henry. [*Recovering.*] I am glad that I did not wager, they are not crooked after all.

Mar. [*In a rage.*] Crooked! Crooked! You monster, how dare you!

Henry. Yet I was right when I told De Mouhy that your voice was loud.

Mar. Oh, this is intolerable. [*Drawing herself up.*] Sire, let me pass.

Henry. What! Would you leave me before we are married? Even in Paris that is not the fashion.

Mar. Your wedding will find you grey if you wait to marry me.

Henry. Not so fast, cos; though the man who marries you may soon be bald, I've not forgotten yet how you pulled my hair at Blois.

Mar. I should like to pull it now.

Henry. [*Laughing.*] I believe you would. And pray, what stops you, Margot. [*Suddenly laughing.*] You have n't forgotten how I boxed your ears. You keep them covered still I see. [*MARGOT has put her hands over her ears. HENRY comes nearer her now.*] I should n't box them now. I should just kiss you, Margot.

Mar. That you shall never do. Let the King, my brother, do his worst, I shall never wed save of my own good will.

Henry. Nor shall you, cos, but your good will shall be for me. I can see you already love me, cousin, and when I have wooed you a little longer—

Mar. [*Laughing bitterly.*] Wooed me, wooed me! is this how you make love? are there naught but brutes in Gascony?

Henry. The men in Gascony are what the women make them; there are no truer lovers in the world. Farewell, cos, you shall know me better yet. [*Bows to go.*] Farewell. [*As he goes drops paper as if by accident.*]

Mar. You dropped something. [*Picks it up.*]

Henry. [*With pretended nervousness.*] Give it me—nay, but you must not read that.

Mar. Oh, but I will. I warrant it is to your mistress. You, too, can love, ay, and write verses as well.

Henry. Give me the paper.

Mar. [*Puts it behind her.*] Nay, I'll know your mistress's name, why you find Margot so plain a thing. Confess it is your mistress.

Henry. If you insist on reading it, it were useless to deny it.

Mar. [*Reads.*]

“A thousand stars the nights unfold,
A thousand flowers are at my feet,
But mine the flower with heart of gold,
My splendid Marguerite.”

My splendid Marguerite! [*Pauses.*] I did n't know. This is your writing?

Henry. Yes, we do write, even in Bearn.

Mar. [*Looking at him.*] I don't quite understand.

Henry. [*Tenderly.*] No, dear Margot, people don't understand everything even in Paris.

Mar. I have much to learn. Will you not teach me, cos? How does a man make love in Gascony?

Henry. [*Tenderly.*] As if the world had vanished and he saw ever and always naught but his lady's face. I knew a boy in Gascony—he was scarce more—who fell in love with a fair lady's picture. Day after day he gazed upon her face, made her his saint, and said his prayers before her, until one day he longed to hear her voice. Mounting his horse he rode both night and day, scarce sleeping and scarce eating, through flooded ford and arid plain, through the forest and the pestilence, laughing at danger, hunger, and fatigue, until he came to Paris and looked upon

his love. She was standing at her window, the sunshine in her hair, the shadow in her eyes, laughter upon her lips, while all the joy of living gave beauty to her face.

Mar. And she was glad that he could love her so, and gave him all her heart?

Henry. He did but hear her laugh and rode away. That laugh rings in his ears now.

Mar. He should have spoken, he should not have robbed her of such love.

Henry. [*Sadly.*] Her mother hated him, her brother sought his life.

Mar. [*Proudly.*] She would not have cared. Mother and brother, all must give way to love. What was her name?

Henry. Her name was Marguerite.

Mar. She was Marguerite, too.

Henry. She was Marguerite, too. [*Looking into her eyes.*] She was a princess of France. Farewell, Mademoiselle, I see you pity him; he should not have looked so high. Farewell, Mademoiselle. [*Going.*]

Mar. Sire! [*She has stood all this time trying to recall a memory.*]

Henry. [*Returning.*] Princess!

Mar. [*Slowly.*] You were that boy; it was you who measured half the length of France, who loved and asked for nothing. Such love is rare at court. I have waited long days to see your face again. [*HENRY looks at her, she bows her head.*] Oh, Sire! [*She then takes a step towards him, when enter MARIE.*]

Marie. Pardon, Mademoiselle, the Queen-Mother requests your presence at once.

Henry. The Queen-Mother awaits you, Princess.

Mar. [*Still looking at Henry.*] Let the Queen-Mother wait.

Marie. [*Horrified.*] But, Madame——

[MARGARET motions her away, and waits till she has left; then she turns with outstretched hands to HENRY.]

Henry. Margot! [*Takes her hands, about to draw her into his arms, when enter DE MOUHY pale and agitated.*]

De M. Sire, Sire! [*Stops at seeing MARGOT.*]

Henry. [*Not looking at DE MOUHY, annoyed at this interruption.*] Well, De Mouhy, what is it?

Mar. I will leave you now, Sire, but will return.
[*Exit.*]

Henry. [*Watching her off.*] What is it, De Mouhy?

De M. Sire, Sire, come! we must go at once. Quick! there is not a moment to be lost.

Henry. [*At last looking at DE MOUHY.*] What's the matter man? I never saw you look so pale, is the plague broke out?

De M. Ay, one that will choose its victims, one that the mass alone will cure. Read that, Sire.

Henry. Who is this from?

De M. From Cardinal Pelve to the Cardinal of Lorraine, our worst enemy. Read, Sire, read.

Henry. [*Reads.*] "At last we have them in the trap. We only need the King's consent, and not a Huguenot will wake in Paris." Then I was right, De Mouhy. The marriage was a snare for me and a snare for all my brethren. This is Catherine's work. [*Suddenly remembering.*] My God! is Margot in it, does she know?

De M. There is more—you have n't finished the letter.

Henry. [*Continues reading.*] “Margot loathes this marriage but for the good of the cause she will consent.” Consent! Consent! Consent to what! My God! will she give herself to lure us all to ruin? I'll not believe it. She looked into my eyes with the glance of a child. I'll not believe it.

De M. What matters it? Taillebois and half a dozen stout blades are waiting with fresh horses. You can see them from this window. They will wait until the clock strikes six. Come, Sire, the day wears on.

Henry. And my friends Coligny, La Rochefoucauld—

De M. We can leave them warning.

Henry. The moment I go the Catholics will be alarmed. There will be a massacre and I shall have given the signal for the death of my friends.

De M. They would die to save you, Sire, and your death cannot help them. Quick, the hand is on the hour. Taillebois will ride at six. Come, Sire.

Henry. [*Firmly.*] I will not leave my friends.

De M. You will be killed.

Henry. I care not. It is better to die once than to live fearing death. [*Looking towards door where MARGOT left.*] Does she know? Does she know?

De M. Come, Sire.

[*At that moment MARGOT's voice heard singing.*]

Henry. No, I stay.

[*The clock strikes six slowly. A pause. DE MOUHY looks at HENRY with an imploring gesture. Horse's hoofs heard starting, then*]

get fainter and fainter. MARGOT'S voice still heard singing. Curtain comes down slowly as HENRY, still looking towards MARGOT'S door, says "Does she know? Does she know?"

[CURTAIN.]

ACT II.

Room in the Louvre, panelling, tapestry, second room showing through tapestry. Centre opening.

[DUC DE GUISE and DUC D'ANJOU discovered.

CATHERINE makes an entrance with her women, who at a sign from her retire.

Guise. Well, Madame, I have waited, waited for a month, and with what result? The marriage is accomplished, and the Huguenots more firmly established than ever. The King grows fonder of them every day.

Cath. Appears to grow fonder of them, M. le Duc.

Anjou. Nay, mother, Guise is right. These heretics have bewitched Charles.

[*Song in distance heard through open window:*

“Grind the sword and melt the lead,
Grind the sword and count the dead.
The Huguenots shall die.”]

Guise. You hear the people? Paris is getting out of hand at our festivities. The monks preach treason in the streets. The Huguenots laugh at our saints, and sing their godless songs outside our churches. Let the King look to it, he is half suspected of heresy himself.

Cath. Nay, good Guise, give me to-night. If by to-night Navarre be not stricken in the dust I place myself in your hands.

Guise. And see, Madame, you do not trifle with

me. The Huguenots say freely you dare not touch Navarre lest the Guise should be too great.

Cath. [*Rising.*] You are too arrogant, M. le Duc. The King has no rival. But the Huguenots shall die. When Ruggieri foretold that Henry of Navarre should be King he pronounced his death.

Guise. An old man's tale. There are thirty thousand astrologers and each says what he wills. But my dead father's blood still calls for vengeance, and Coligny shall die to-morrow if I kill him with my own hands. And there is no King in France, no, nor in the world that shall stop me. If the King is afraid I will raise Paris myself. I am the Guise. Think over it well, Madame. I'll to the King and tell him he must choose between Paris and the Huguenots, between his throne and Henry of Navarre. I take my leave. [*Exit.*]

Cath. [*Passionately.*] The insolent, the braggart, that he should speak so in the King's own palace and to the King's mother.

Anjou. The marriage must be annulled. The Bearnais flouts us all. You know what the court says?

Cath. Yes, that even on his wedding night he left my daughter with her ladies.

Anjou. That this marriage is no marriage and Margot is still a maid. Why, mother, why? Henry is ardent, Margot is fair. Can he suspect her?

Cath. Impossible. Besides, Margot is innocent, she knows nothing.

Anjou. But your ladies, Charlotte de Sauv , La Belle Dayole, have they found out nothing?

Cath. Henry makes love to all and loves none.

Anjou. The Flying Squadron grows dull or old.

Where does he spend his nights? He must love some one. Is that some one deceiving you?

Cath. My women deceive me? They dare not! But I begin to fear this Bearnais. He laughs, always laughs, but he eludes my every snare.

Anjou. He will not escape to-night. When Charles sees his form in the mirror he will not spare him. When he sees him crowned [*rubbing his hands*] he will kill him before our eyes.

Cath. Yes, I can trust Ruggieri, he will not fail us.

Enter PAGE.

Page. The Queen of Navarre.

Enter MARGOT.

Cath. Ah, Margot, I have wanted to see you.

Mar. I am always in the palace, Madame.

Cath. Ay, but these dances, pageants, and masks so fill up the days that the hours seem too few. Tell me, child, are you happy?

Mar. Why do you ask, Madame?

Cath. Because my heart misgives me, Margot. You look pale and troubled. Were we right to force you into this marriage?

Anjou. You wish to talk to Margot? Good-bye, sister, don't forget if you're in trouble you have always your brother and your mother. Good-bye, mother. [*Kisses her hand.*] I'll join the Guise and urge Charles to consent to his wishes. [*Exit.*]

Mar. [*Throwing herself at her mother's feet.*] Oh, mother, mother, what have I done that I should be so unhappy?

Cath. [*Patting her head.*] There, there, child, don't agitate yourself. What's done can't be undone.

Mar. If he only loved me, mother.

Cath. Perhaps he does. You're excited, child, and you make too much of little things.

Mar. Too much of little things! And you are my mother. [*Starting to her feet.*] Oh, if I were the lowliest woman in the kingdom he should not have flouted me so. To tell me he had traversed France alone to hear me say one word! And then to leave me on my wedding night. Oh, that night! The maids nudged each other and laughed as their eyes grew wide with wonder, while I sat dry-eyed and amazed, weary and heartsick, until the dawn crept in. [*Passionately.*] Then I hated him, I, who had never known what hate had meant!

Cath. The marriage must be annulled.

Mar. And I thought for a moment I that should be so happy, that I, a princess, was to be loved as a woman, just for what I am. And he fooled me. If I could only make him feel as I have felt, if I could only have him at my feet for one short minute and spurn him as I have been spurned.

Cath. [*Suddenly interested.*] Why, child, you are jealous, you have loved the man.

Mar. I hate him.

Cath. You want him to love you?

Mar. Yes, I want him to love me. I want to humiliate him as I have been humiliated.

Cath. And you shall.

Mar. There's not a lady at court he admires less than me.

Cath. He shall never look at them again. Give him this. [*Gives MARGOT the bottle RUGGIERI gave her in the first act.*]

Mar. [*Looking at it.*] Why it is empty.

Cath. No, but it is clear as crystal. It is a love

potion; Ruggieri prepared it for me. It never fails. It will make him true till death.

Mar. May I taste it, mother? [*Goes to open it.*]

Cath. [*Quickly.*] You must not open it. [*Slowly.*] It will lose its virtue. Ask your husband to toast you, put it in his wine, you will never complain of him again. But let it not leave your hand, child; it works only for the giver.

Mar. Trust me, mother. If he but loves me I believe I shall forget I have ever been unhappy.

Enter MARIE.

Cath. Now, child, look your loveliest; the dancers begin and Ruggieri is to show us the future.

Mar. Ruggieri. I am afraid of him, but if he makes Henry love me I shall forget it. Good-bye, mother, I shall be gay now. [*Exit.*]

Cath. [*Turning to Marie.*] Well, child, what have you to tell me?

Marie. Nothing, Madame.

Cath. Nothing, nothing, have all my women lost their heads?

Marie. The King of Navarre came with his gentlemen in the afternoon as usual, laughed, then yawned, then laughed and went away again.

Cath. And you have no suspicion as to why he behaved so strangely?

Marie. None, Madame.

Cath. You're stupid, child. [*Enter DE MOUHY.*] Here is that dull fool, Henry's shadow; see if he knows aught.

De M. [*Coming up as CATHERINE finishes.*]

Cath. [*Aside to Marie.*] Task him with his master's infidelity. [*Exit CATHERINE.*]

Marie. [*Looks at DE MOUHY, who figdets, twists his hat around and generally looks nervous.*] M. de Mouhy.

De M. Mademoiselle.

Marie. Do you never smile?

De M. [*Smiles sickly and then looks serious again.*] Sometimes.

Marie. M. de Mouhy, I vow you 're very dull. Do you know you are alone with a very charming woman?

De M. [*Stolidly.*] Well.

Marie. [*Going to him and looking up into his face.*] Do you always wear those melancholy suits? Are you never gay? Why don't you follow your master's example?

De M. [*Grimly.*] I will. [*Seizes MARIE in his arms and kisses her.*]

Marie. How dare you, M. de Mouhy, how dare you!

De M. Well, you asked me to.

Marie. Asked you to! I always thought you Huguenots spoke the truth.

De M. You said follow Henry's example.

Marie. I meant in dresses, in bearing. Tut, kiss me! I would have you know a king has kissed these lips.

De M. [*Smacks his lips as if tasting kiss.*] He was right.

Marie. You know, M. de Mouhy, you 're not really as ugly as you look.

De M. [*Dazed.*] Eh!

Marie. If you were to have a ribbon here. [*Takes off ribbon from her own neck.*] A rosette there. [*Pins rosette which she has taken from her own shoulder.*] A shoulder-knot. [*Pins hers on him.*] And a red

plume in your hat. [*Takes hers off and pins it in his hat.*] Ah, yes, and a sash, perhaps. [*Takes off her sash.*] Why, now, De Mouhy, you look quite a man. [*All during this business DE MOUHY stands quite stiff.*]

De M. May I move?

Marie. One moment, your moustachios. [*She curls them.*] And the beard, ah, so, and now [*Looking round gets scent from reticule.*]

De M. No, no, Mademoiselle, I cannot use scent.

Marie. Why not? it is some of the Duc d'Anjou's. Rene Bianci made it specially for him.

De M. If it were made by the Queen herself I'd not make a civet cat of myself. I'm a plain soldier, Mademoiselle, and you must take me for what I am.

Marie. I will, and I'll make you what I like. [*Sprinkles him with scent, he sniffs and makes faces. Gives him more.*] Now smile, M. de Mouhy, smile, and you shall dance with me to-night.

De M. I don't dance.

Marie. Then you shall hold my hand while Rugieri shows us the future in the mirror. But you must learn, M. de Mouhy, I shall teach you.

De M. [*Looks at his feet.*] Do you think the floor will stand them?

Marie. [*Looks at them, then up into his face.*] They are very nice big feet.

[*DE MOUHY tries to catch her, but she trips lightly across the stage, having run under his arm.*]

Come, M de Mouhy, you see. Tram la, la, la, point your toes so.

[*DE MOUHY tries to do the same, overbalances, and nearly turns over. MARIE laughs.*]

De M. I don't see why you laugh, it's very serious business.

Marie. Now once more, M. de Mouhy, and I must go back and tell the Queen-Mother all you have told me of your master.

De M. But I have n't told you anything.

Marie. And you must n't. [*Puts her finger on lip.*] See? Then I shall not have to hide anything from Catherine, but if I know, I dare n't deceive her, M. de Mouhy, or I should die suddenly or go into a convent, which [*looking at him archly*][‡] would be worse. La, M. de Mouhy, don't look so serious. Be like your master—laugh, man, laugh.

De M. When Henry laughs something is going to happen.

Marie. Something is always going to happen, Monsieur Sour-face. Just now, you are going to try the dance with me.

[They dance up and down, DE MOUHY balancing awkwardly until he falls over. MARIE catching him, he picks her up and kisses her, both laughing as HENRY OF NAVARRE enters.]

Henry. Ha, ha, Marie, don't blush, you'll shame the rest of the court. De Mouhy, De Mouhy, what will they say in Nérac? Don't go, Marie. Mordieu, I must have one too. No? Well, as you wish. The rascal, he said he stayed to be near me. Fie, Marie, fie! [*Exit MARIE, turns quickly to DE MOUHY.*] What did you tell her, man?

De M. Tell her?

Henry. Tell her? Yes, tell her? Do you think she kisses you for your beauty? They all kiss me and

I tell them—what I think Catherine ought to know.

De M. Sire, you wrong her.

Henry. Perhaps, but if I don't, she'll wrong you.

De M. She warned me, Sire, to tell her nothing, that the Queen-Mother would question her.

Henry. Good girl, good girl. [*Suddenly looking at DE MOUHY and laughing.*] *Ventre St. Gris!* Why, then she's in love.

De M. In love!

Henry. With you, old addle pate. It's well to know whom we can trust. Listen. [*Song in distance; as it finishes HENRY sings last line, making a gesture of cutting his throat.*] "The Huguenots shall die." The Paris air is something strong, *De Mouhy.* [*Yawns.*] And Catherine does n't let one get much sleep.

De M. Anything new, Sire?

Henry. As I passed under a scaffold in the rue de Petit Moines, half a dozen bricks just missed my head. Even yours would n't have withstood them, *De Mouhy.*

De M. An accident, Sire!

Henry. Perhaps, but under the workman's blouse I caught a glimpse of the Medici colours. [*His voice suddenly catches.*] *Dure-dent* is dead.

De M. Your boarhound!

Henry. [*Sadly, nodding his head.*] Nothing in the world loved me so much.

De M. Sire! [*Falls on his knees and kisses HENRY'S hand.*]

Henry. [*Putting his hand on his shoulder.*] Except you, old friend. [*Pulls himself up and laughs.*] I had a cask of Cahors wine sent me from Gascony. The King's wine [*significantly*] might not suit me. It got lost for a day in the palace on its arrival. When it was opened some of it spilled on the floor.

De M. And the dog licked it up?

Henry. [*Nods.*] He lived an hour. Catherine keeps busy. How she loves me, De Mouhy. She sent her carriage for me yesterday, the only one in Paris. It broke down in the rue des Ecoliers.

De M. You were not hurt, Sire?

Henry. No, I rode my horse, I put her gentleman in the carriage, he broke his neck. Duvre is dead. De Mouhy, the blow is going to fall.

De M. What shall we do, Sire, do we stay?

Henry. No, laugh, wait and laugh, and when the time comes, fall fighting.

De M. Perhaps we are mistaken, Sire.

Henry. Never you believe it, De Mouhy. [*Significantly.*] Bernard Palissy has left Paris.

De M. What of it? A potter!

Henry. A great genius, De Mouhy. Philibert de l'Orme has gone, and Germain Pilon, Catherine's architect, Huguenots all, don't you understand? Catherine and Charles can make dukes and princes, as many as they please, but only God can make artists and architects, and the Tuileries have to be built. No, the blow is going to fall. The Guise, Tavannes, D'Anjou, the Queen-Mother, they worry Charles both day and night. They only need to find him with a toothache, a corn that pinches, or an undigested dinner, and, mordieu, we are dead men.

De M. And yet you laugh with the loudest, make love with the lightest.

Henry. We're sitting on a volcano; if we don't laugh, mordieu, the crust will crack. Ventre St. Gris! Do you think I care for death, that comes in a minute, an hour, a day, and then is done? I'd give my life, my kingdom, my cause, if I could keep my

honour and know my Margot true. That 's the hell I live in—doubt, suspicion, despair. Does my wife know? Is my Margot true? Ever since you brought me that letter the question has rapped on my brain minute by minute, hour by hour. Does Margot know? De Mouhy, it maddens me. I look into her eyes, I 'd pledge my soul that she and treachery have never met. Don't you see the damnable part of it? If it were only myself I would tell her the truth, but I can't betray my comrades. They are blind and live in a fool's paradise. The worst is I am throwing her into the Guise's arms.

De M. I 'll cut his throat in the Palace.

Henry. And have all Paris on us. The populace adore him. He is more than the pope to them.

De M. If she be false——

Henry. Why, then, I 'll laugh, De Mouhy, laugh as they laugh in hell.

De M. She may be true.

Henry. Then not all the tears that first made ocean salt would wash out my remorse.

Enter RUGGIERI from tapestry, finger on lips.

Rug. Sire!

Henry. Ruggieri!

Rug. Beware, Sire, your first peril is to-night.

Henry. Speak plainly, man, and tell me what there is to fear.

Rug. Nay, I know not, but this morning a young maid watched the beryl stone. She saw you in the crystal in the midst of splendour and the dance, then a thisk mist wrapped you from sight. The danger is near, farewell.

De M. By Heaven, you shall say more! [*Draws*

sword, steps towards RUGGIERI, HENRY restrains him.]
 Speak plainly or I'll spit you where you stand!
[Breaks away, RUGGIERI disappears behind tapestry,
DE MOUHY draws it and finds him gone.] The old con-
 jurer, has he vanished through the wall?

Henry. Like enough. *[Turning away.]* I must find out the trick of that door.

De M. Do you trust his warning?

Henry. A warning should never be despised.
[Tapping DE MOUHY.] When Catherine hands the cup it is Ruggieri prepares the wine. *[Laughs.]*
 Why, man, so serious? Laugh, De Mouhy, laugh. This is a feast, not a funeral.

De M. *[Earnestly.]* I have it, Sire. Only Charles stands between you and destruction. The stars say you will be King. When they show him the future in the mirror——

Henry. We shall laugh, De Mouhy. That was not all the prophecy. Did you ever see a hangman hang from his own rope, a hunter in the trap he dug for the bear?

De M. I don't understand.

Henry. *[Chuckling.]* You will, you will when you see Catherine to-night.

Enter CHARLES. GUISE is on one hand, ANJOU on the other. CATHERINE and entire court follow, TAVANNES, BIRAGUES, LA ROCHEFOUCAULD, LA BELLE DAYOLE, LA FOSSEUSE, MARIE, CHARLOTTE DE SAUVÉ, TORIGNY and MARGOT. MARGOT comes left, where GUISE talks to her during dance. Curtain at back opened so as to make both rooms one.

Charles. Ah, Henry, come and sit by me. Anjou bores me with his politics, but you laugh and never ask for anything.

Henry. Because I lack nothing, with my dear Margot here. [*Passing by her.*] What could a man want more?

Charles. A great deal. [*Wickedly.*] Ask M. de Guise and my dear brother. What do you think they want? They want me to consent to—shall I tell him, Guise? Shall I ask his advice?

Henry. Mordieu, no, I 'm sure they would n't like it. Give them their way, Sire, but don't ask counsel of me, or I shall be as dull as they.

Charles. But they want me to——

Henry. Then do it, Sire.

Charles. But you have n't heard what it is yet.

Henry. I was n't born for a king, Sire, I always say yes.

Charles. Then you are always giving.

Henry. No, Sire. I said yes till I had given all away; I have nothing to give, but I still say yes, so consent, Sire.

Charles. If I did n't love you, Harry, I would n't wait a day. You don't know what you are saying.

Henry. But you know, Sire, and while you love me I want to know no more. [*Significantly.*] I trust you, Sire.

Charles. You shall. [*Noise in streets; song, "The Huguenots shall die."*] You hear my good Parisians, Harry? They love me as little as you. M. de Guise takes care of that.

Guise. [*Hotly.*] Sire!

Charles. A dance, a dance, this is no time for statecraft. [*Waves De Guise aside.*] Soon we will hear Ruggieri.

[*Dance. Every one laughing and talking.*

Towards finish GUISE comes towards MAR-

GOT. GUISE and MARGOT dance alone.
Scene played in whisper.

Guise. When can I see you alone, Margot?

Mar. You forget, I am a queen.

Guise. Ay, Queen among queens, as you were always my queen of women, the unmatched flower, the Marguerite of France. When can I see you alone?

Mar. Never, now.

Guise. Never? Do you think such love as mine can always be kept at a distance? Nothing could long keep me from your side.

Mar. I shall go south and put the Loire between us.

Guise. I would swim it in deepest flood to look upon your face.

Mar. At Nérac the castle walls are high.

Guise. I would scale the mountains themselves to die in your arms.

Mar. You might swim the river and scale the castle walls, but still I have a husband.

Guise. A Huguenot, a heretic, who is never by your side. Ah, you start. Did you think that the whole court did n't know it? Are you going to endure it, Margot?

Mar. [*Quietly.*] The whole court knows it?

Guise. Ay, and Madame de Sauv  says—

Mar. [*Starting to her feet.*] Charlotte de Sauv !

Guise. Sit down, Margot, Henry is watching us. [*She sits.*] Is he, to treat a princess of France like a peasant girl, and pass her by with a glance? Where is your pride, Princess?

Mar. [*Bitterly.*] In the dust.

Guise. Then rouse yourself and treat him with the contempt he has shown you.

Mar. [*Slowly.*] Do you love me, Henry of Guise?

Guise. I worship you. You, Margot.

Mar. Is it the princess you woo, or the woman?

Guise. The woman, a thousand times the woman. The Guise is great enough to love where he will, to love for love alone. O that you were a beggar girl, that I might make you a queen.

Mar. If I were sure——

Guise. Look at him. [*Henry has mingled with the dancers.*] I will come to your room to-night.

Mar. No, no.

Guise. I will come, I will come—when you send me that riband. [*Pointing to riband on her shoulder.*]

Mar. I have my pride—I shall not send it, M. de Guise.

Guise. It is because you have pride that you will send it.

[*GUISE retires as dance breaks up and HENRY comes down, laughing, with the dancers.*]

Henry. Ah, Marie, you danced adorably. De Mouhy is a lucky fellow.

Marie. He is—to have such a master. [*Curtsies.*]

Henry. To have such a mistress. [*Bows.*] Come, Marie, I'll tell you a secret.

Marie. [*Whispering.*] You must n't, did n't De Mouhy tell you, the dullard?

Henry. It's all right, Marie, my secrets are for the whole world. You can tell it to Catherine herself.

Marie. [*Aloud.*] I shall be honoured, your Majesty. His Majesty is going to tell me a secret.

Torigny. May I hear too, Sire?

Fosseuse. And I too, Sire?

Dayole. And I?

Henry. Mordieu, yes, but you 'll not tell? [*Mysteriously.*] It 's about my wife.

[*MARIE looks uncomfortable, FOSSEUSE and DAYOLE eager.*

Fos. Yes, Sire, yes.

Dayole. Yes, Sire, yes.

Henry. You are sure you 'll not tell? [*They all nod.*] She 's [*he whispers*], she 's the best wife and the most beautiful woman in France. [*Laughs at their confusion, turns away, and meets DE MOUHY.*] Let them tell that to the Queen-Mother.

[*MARIE laughs and stands by MARGOT.*

Henry. [*Turns and meets MADAME DE SAUVÉ.*] Ah, Madame. [*Kisses her hand.*] Why did the music stop? There is only one woman more adorable than Madame de Sauv  dancing. [*Handing her to a seat.*]

De S. [*Disappointedly, looks as if she thought he were going to say MARGOT.*] Sire! [*Looks at MARGOT.*] And that is——

Henry. [*As she sits.*] Madame de Sauv  seated.

De S. Ah, Sire, you flatter me. I cannot hope that my poor beauty—[*Looks at MARGOT. CATHERINE and DE SAUV  exchange glances.*]

Henry. If I love the lily I need not hate the rose.

De S. Oh, Sire, if I thought you loved me——

Henry. [*Whispering.*] Would you be kind?

De S. If you would prove it and would trust me.

Henry. Trust you—you 've turned a passable king into a very poor poet.

De S. You 've written verses, Sire, and for me? You will read them?

Henry. Do I not live to sing your praises?

De S. [*Clasps her hands.*] Oh, Sire!

[HENRY reads, Court gathers round, MARGOT listens, jealously.]

Henry. [Reads.]

The nymphs have left their pleasant streams,
The fairies left the grove;
Deserted is the land of dreams,
Of beauty, light, and love.

No sound of laughter in the brook,
No rustle in the leaf,
No echo comes from cave or nook,
No voice of joy or grief.

Dryad and nymph to court are gone,
And never more will rove,
From her who makes all beauty one,
My sweet Charlotte de Sauv .

[All the time he is reading MARGOT watches and listens.]

Charles. Faith, Harry, you move apace; the hunter is as great a courtier as them all.

Henry. When your Majesty takes up the pen your subjects can do no less.

Charles. I write but indifferently, Harry.

Henry. Indeed Sire, they tell me that Ronsard has turned hunter.

[CHARLES moves off pleased with the compliment.]

De S. Oh, Sire, what beautiful verses!

Henry. Hmm! They're not bad for a king.

De S. Nay, Sire, you wrong yourself. Had you not been a king you would have been a great poet.

Henry. Had I not been a king no one would have thought so.

De S. Does your Majesty never believe any one sincere?

Henry. Yes, I know I am myself—sometimes.

De S. Sometimes?

Henry. [*Ardently.*] When I look into a fair lady's face.

De S. Any fair lady's?

Henry. Charlotte de Sauv s.

[MARGOT, *who has been showing signs of jealousy, comes down.*

De S. You mean it, Sire?

Henry. How can I prove it? I will put my verses to music and sing them outside your chamber window to-night.

De S. To me, Sire?

[MARGOT *turns angrily away, fingering riband.*

Henry. To you. [*Changing lightly.*] And to the stars—if the stars will listen.

De S. And you will trust me, Sire?

Henry. Try me.

De S. Then tell me why you—I'm afraid, Sire.

Henry. You do not love me.

De S. Tell me why you have flouted——

Henry. [*Quietly.*] Go on, Madame.

De S. Why you have deserted the Queen of Navarre, the most beautiful woman in France, for poor little me.

Henry. I will, Madame de Sauv : because I am not worthy of her, because I'm only fit for her ladies and her maids.

De S. [*Bridling.*] You are too modest, Sire. Is Monsieur de Guise worthy of the Queen of Navarre?

Henry. Madame, you are not a man, I cannot call you to account. Believe me your beauty would go better with a quiet tongue. Tell Catherine that my

sweet Charlotte de Sauvé—[Laughs, bows, kisses her hand, and retires. MADAME DE SAUVÉ stamps her foot and retires confused.]

Mar. [Left.] Marie, take this riband to the Duc de Guise and say one word, "To-night."

Marie. To-night?

Mar. To-night. He will understand. [MARIE hesitates and goes.]

Charles. Where is Ruggieri?

Rug. [Steps from behind tapestry.] Here, Sire.

[He is so near the KING that he starts.

Charles. Peste, man, where did you spring from? You startled me. You promised us a glimpse of things that are to come.

Rug. The future reveals itself but dimly, in moments, as a land seen by lightning.

Charles. It is well. [Turning to RUGGIERI.] Show me how long I shall reign and show me who comes after me.

Rug. Let the lights be lowered. The great glass is prepared.

Charles. Do you trust these prophecies, Harry?

Henry. When I want a fortune for my sweetheart.

Charles. [Moodily.] I distrust them, but I cannot forget Luke Gaurico foretold my father's death.

[Lights have been lowered and tapestry drawn aside, revealing a large mirror, which shows nothing but mist. Lights deepen. Presently figure of CHARLES appears.

Charles. It is myself, even as I live to-day.

Rug. Silence Sire, your voice will break the spell. Each year you have to live the figure will appear.

[Figure reappears.

Charles. Look, it grows clear again and strong and well.

[Figure disappears.]

Am I not young, with many years to reign? See, it comes again. *[Figure appears bathed in blood.]* Look! look! it sweats at every pore, and see, the perspiration on the brow is blood—ah—it's gone—wait—it will come again—no—yes—it must come again. I cannot die so soon. *[Figure appears dimly.]* Ah, once more. That is not I. *[Figure gets clearer.]*

Cath. *[To ANJOU.]* Watch, watch, it is the Bearnais.

[Figure gets clearer and shows ANJOU.]

Anjou. Look, Charles, look, it is Navarre crowned King. *[Looks at mirror, sees it is himself.]* My God! it is myself, and Charles——

Charles. *[CHARLES has watched, fascinated, eyes starting out of head; he jumps to his feet.]* My brother King, while I die bathed in sweat of blood! It shall not be. *[Rushes at ANJOU, seizes him by throat, raises dagger.]* When you are dead I'll laugh at prophecies. *[HENRY rushes to him, seizes raised arm, Court looking on petrified.]* Let go my arm, Harry! let go, I say! Fool, do you not know that Anjou wants your life! Do you not know that he wants to massacre—let go or you die, too. Fool, fool, fool!

Henry. Lights, lights, you fools! the lights will bring him to. Sire, Sire, it is your brother. Sire, think—you are the King. Where is your Majesty?

[Lights turned on. The glare brings CHARLES to his senses. He drops dagger. Mutters, looks at CATHERINE.]

Charles. Mother, this is your trick. Where is

Ruggieri? He shall hang for this—hang when the rack has twisted all his limbs and the wedge has crushed his bones. Anjou, you are my brother, but if you once look higher than my shoulder [*taps his crown*] I'll leave you nothing to wear a crown upon. [*To NAVARRE.*] Harry, you're a fool. [*Gloomily to himself.*] Two years, two years. [*Exit muttering.*]

Cath. [*Whispering.*] You are not safe, my son. The poison is in his blood, he will not forget.

Anjou. Why, did you not remember that the prophecy says I reign too? He will kill me in one of his mad moods. Only the Bearnais saved me.

Cath. [*To ANJOU.*] Come, my son, we must after and pacify your brother. [*Exeunt.*]

Henry. [*To MARGOT.*] Why did you not fly with the court? I have offended your brother. Mordieu, a leper with bells would not have frightened them more.

Mar. I stay with my husband. You have saved me a brother, but more I thank you for having kept Charles's hands clean. I love Charles, and for all his mad fits I think Charles loves me.

Henry. Charles loves me while Anjou is his heir.

Mar. [*A pause.*] Sire, why did you marry me?

Henry. [*Looks at her.*] Look in your glass child, and you will find reason enough there.

Mar. Spare me your praises and tell me why you wedded me. Had I such thoughts as you must have had for me, not all the kings that ever reigned in France had made me become your bride. Sire, why did you marry me?

Henry. [*Pauses.*] I married you to bring our country peace. God puts us here but for a little space. But France lives on. France comes before

all. She was drenched with blood and bare with famine, Margot. As I rode here I saw the peasants harnessed to the plough; the King had seized their oxen. And the hunger! You don't know what hunger is.

Mar. I have been lost in the chase and spent the night in the woods.

Henry. You have not seen the bones bursting through the skin and the eyes wild and vacant, you have not seen the child die in its mother's arms because her breasts were dry. [*MARGOT, covering her face with her hands, "It is horrible."*] It is what war has done. I care not if I praise God in French or Latin, but I have sworn that I will give my country peace. Margot, if I had hated you, I would have married you.

Mar. [*Sadly.*] All was for France and nothing for the woman. Your boy in Gascony was all a dream.

Henry. No, on my soul, you know not what I suffer. I have a garden full of roses, I may not pluck one. Oh, Margot, I would give life and soul to serve my country, but all the joy of the world is wrapped in you. Margot, I will trust you. May I come to you, may I be yours indeed?

Mar. [*Breathlessly.*] You love me, you love me, Harry?

Henry. Yes, I love you.

Mar. Harry!

[*She extends her hands, he takes them, then slowly dropping them he takes her face between his hands and kisses her lips.*]

Henry. My Margot!

Mar. [*Leaning her arms on his arms.*] And Madame de Sauvé?

Henry. A spy of the Queen-Mother's, sweetheart. I play with her as she would play with me.

Mar. Then you will not go to her window to-night?

Henry. No, for I will be with you, my heart.

Mar. [*With a happy little sigh.*] Oh, Harry, at last! [*Snuggling into his arms. Then she suddenly remembers the Guise.*] No, not to-night, Harry, do not come to-night.

Henry. [*Looks at her, then all his suspicions revive.*] Not to-night? You are playing with me, Margot; you do not love me.

Mar. I do, I do, by sweet Genevieve.

Henry. Then why may I not come to you to-night?

Mar. I cannot tell you. Oh, trust me, trust me, Henry, your honour shall be safe. You have tortured me for so many days, have faith for just one more.

Henry. I have been cruel, I will trust you, Margot. I swear I will not come until you send for me. [*He takes her in his arms and is just about to kiss her when MARGOT disengages herself, saying "Ssh!" Enter the COURT, CHARLES, CATHERINE, MARIE, etc.*]

Charles. Harry, I was mad just now; you saved me [*looking at his hands as if he saw blood on them*] from the brand of Cain. [*HENRY kisses his hand.*] I would I were your brother. Wine, wine.

Henry. Now, Sire, you are yourself again. Drink, Sire, drink. There is more wisdom in a full cup than in all of Ruggieri's ravings.

Mar. [*To CATHERINE.*] Mother, he loves me, he loves me, I shall not need your potion.

Cath. Give it to him, child, it will make him secure. It will please him if you will fill his cup yourself.

Mar. I'll do so; he cannot love me too much.

Cath. [To MARIE, abruptly.] Well, what did you learn?

Marie. Nothing, Madame.

Cath. Take care, if you deceive me——

Marie. [Frightened.] The Queen of Navarre——

Cath. Yes, Margot, well?

Marie. She sent a riband to the Duc de Guise, and the one word "To-night."

Cath. [Bewildered.] To-night, to-night?

Charles. Come, Harry, drink, drink, and we'll laugh at omens. Give me good wine, I feel I could live for ever. Wine there.

Mar. [To MARIE.] Find the Duc de Guise, ask for my riband back, and say "Never."

Marie. I go, Madame.

[HENRY takes up goblet from servant and is about to fill when MARGOT approaches.]

Mar. Sire, may I not pour it for you?

Henry. A loving cup! I shall out-Jove the gods with such a Hebe.

Mar. [Has phial in hand, takes wine from HENRY'S hand, and half turns as she pours it in, blushing.] It was my mother thought it my duty.

Henry. [Suspiciously.] Your mother?

Mar. I've filled it with heart's happiness to the brim.

Henry. Then I will drain it to the very dregs.

Charles. Why, Margot, I never saw you look so beautiful. Your eyes are stars.

Mar. Sire, you have made me happy.

Charles. You 're a lucky fellow, Harry.

Henry. I would not change places even with you, Sire. Ladies of the court and gentlemen all, I give you a toast. My white star with the heart of gold. My Marguerite of Marguerites! [*Holds cup up to MARGUERITE, watches her. CATHERINE comes down anxiously.*]

Mar. [*Looking at HENRY's hand.*] What a wonderful stone, Sire.

Henry. Ay, like you, Margot, it has a heart of gold. [*Lifts cup.*]

Mar. [*Fascinated by stone.*] Look, Sire, it turns green.

Henry. Green! [*Laughs.*] Why, so it is. [*Looks at Queen-Mother's face, his face hardens. Looks at MARGOT suspiciously.*] Won't you drink first, Margot? it is our loving cup.

Mar. [*Smiling into his face.*] Our loving cup, yes. [*She takes cup, lifts it, while HENRY all the time watches CATHERINE's movements.*] To my husband!

Cath. [*Convulsively.*] Margot!

[*HENRY stumbles, catches MARGOT's arm, as if to save himself, spills wine, looks at DE MOUHY, who is standing by.*]

Henry. My wife just saved me, De Mouhy. [*Laughs.*] What a clumsy Bearnais you have married, Margot. [*Takes DE MOUHY's glass.*] My Marguerite of Marguerites. [*Drains it.*]

All. Marguerite, Marguerite!

[*As curtain descends HENRY gives one look at CATHERINE, who stands rigid in one corner,*

*and laughs. Their eyes meet and he raises
his goblet again.]*

Henry. My Marguerite!

[CURTAIN.]

ACT III.

MARGUERITE'S apartments in the Louvre. A tiring room, if possible, showing glimpses of bedroom through tapestry. A large window looking on to river. Door down L. Cabinet with secret door up L. MARGOT'S picture on wall.

[MARIE discovered walking up and down impatiently; takes up book, puts it down again, looks at old time-piece, goes to window and is looking out when DE MOUHY enters gaily dressed as a cavalier. Goes to window, seizes MARIE, she screams, he kisses her.

Marie. Clumsy, I might have fallen out of the window [*looks and shudders*] and your little Marie would have been nothing but a heap of bones.

De M. [*Looking down.*] Yes, it would have been a fearsome drop, but you 'll laugh at precipices when you come to Gascony with me.

Marie. I 'm not sure I 'll go to Gascony with you.

De M. Oh, but you will. You were looking out of the window for me then.

Marie. I was n't; it's too dark, and you 're a big ugly—[*suddenly seeing his fine clothes.*] Oh, M. de Mouhy, how fine you look.

De M. [*Turning round.*] Do you like them?

Marie. Like them? why, the King does n't look so grand. Put on your hat.

[DE MOUHY puts it on straight. Not like that, so [*gives it a rakish angle*], and your

sash so. Now you are a courtier. Have n't you anything for me to-day?

De M. Why [*kisses her*] yes.

Marie. [*Sniffs.*] What's that? [*Sniffs.*] That scent? It's flowers of Provence. I knew it. Oh, you beast, you've been deceiving me.

De M. Deceiving you, Marie, I swear——

Marie. Don't swear—you're a Huguenot.

De M. But, Marie——

Marie. [*Scornfully.*] Flowers of Provence! That is La Belle Dayole's scent. Now, now I know why you have put on those fine feathers.

De M. Of course you do, I put them on to please you.

Marie. To please me! I suppose it was to please me that La Belle Dayole gave you her scent. Fool! She wanted all the court to know that she had captured you. Though Heaven knows why—you're not much to look at. [*Her nose in the air.*]

De M. Marie, I swear to you I bought it at Rene's.

Marie. Bought it at Rene's indeed! A likely tale! What have you to do with scent?

De M. You first made me use it, I bought it only for you.

Marie. For me? I hate it in a man. It's only fit for fops, for exquisites! I like a soldier. Come here. [*DE MOUHY goes up to her apprehensively.*] Don't look so frightened, I shan't bite you, booby. Now. [*Undoes all the business of second act, takes off sash, uncurls moustachios, etc., takes feather out of hat.*] Put it on. [*He puts it on at a rakish angle.*] Not like that. [*She puts it on square.*] I might have known how you would conduct yourself with such a master.

De M. But, Marie——

Marie. Spare your protestations. I'll protect you from the court ladies in the future. Don't you court each and all like Henry of Navarre. Be warned. They say he had a narrow escape to-day.

De M. Oh, what tale runs at court to-day?

Marie. The courtiers say that Catherine tried to poison Henry and that he was saved by a magic ring.

De M. Then the courtiers lie.

Marie. Why, was n't the cup poisoned?

De M. The cup was poisoned, but Henry was saved by his own wits. Why did he offer it to Margot? To see if Catherine would start.

Marie. And then he laughed; oh, I begin to understand your Henry of Navarre.

De M. The Queen-Mother begins to understand him too. She fears him, but if she can only stir up strife between him and Margot she will be able to destroy him.

Marie. He will deserve it, I shall not pity him.

De M. I rise or fall with him, his death means mine.

Marie. His death means yours?

De M. Ay, and all of our Religion. This marriage is our only safeguard.

Marie. What, oh what have I done? Oh, I have ruined you.

De M. Ruined me—what do you mean?

Marie. Arthur, forgive me! She frightened me and looked at me like a snake, and I can't help myself. I did n't know it would hurt you.

De M. What have you done?

Marie. Marguerite sent me with a riband to the Duc de Guise, with the one word "To-night."

De M. Sang Dieu! Then she is in the plot after

all. The Guise sent for! She is a true Valois, she is false.

Marie. No, she's my mistress, I'll not have her miscalled. But I told Catherine. I've injured you and ruined her; oh, what can we do?

De M. Stop the Guise. No, let him come—Henry will kill him.

Marie. That is what Catherine wants; then the Parisians will kill you all. No, the Guise must n't come, but how can we stop him? I searched for him. Margot sent for her riband back, but the Guise had gone.

De M. Let him come. I'll meet him at the door and kill him with my own hand.

Marie. No, no, Arthur, you must not. You are not of the blood, they would break you on the wheel. Oh, it would kill me.

Enter CATHERINE silently; they fall apart confused.

Cath. You may go, Sir. [*DE MOUHY exit.*] Child, you are too familiar with this heretic.

Marie. I did but obey your Majesty's instructions.

Cath. [*Eagerly.*] Well, what have you learned?

Marie. Some one must have warned him, he will tell nothing.

Cath. Has the King of Navarre been to say good-night yet? I believe it is his custom.

Marie. Always, Madame.

Cath. We will await him. The Queen of Navarre is ill and cannot see him to-night. [*Looks at fireplace.*] See that the fire be lighted.

Marie. [*Astonished.*] The fire! But, Madame, it is August.

Cath. The nights are fresh and the Queen is frail. Do you hear me, child?

[MARIE goes to bell, summons servant, servant enters, lights fire with tinder, exit.]

Cath. There is no word from the Duc de Guise?

Marie. No, Madame.

Cath. Good, he will come, Henry and he will meet.

[Suddenly.] You 've not mentioned this to a soul?

Marie. [Frightened.] No, Madame, no.

Cath. If my women speak I have an oubliette where they may talk all day and none will listen. You understand, child?

Marie. [Almost inaudibly.] Yes, Madame.

Cath. [Sees parcel on table.] What 's this?

Marie. It is for the King of Navarre.

Cath. For the King of Navarre? [Looks at it again, and about to open it, when Henry enters whistling, takes off sword, and glances quickly around.]

Henry. Ah, mother, this is kind of you. Where is Margot?

Cath. She is not well, so I kept her in my apartments with her sister until she retires.

Henry. Not well? I must go to her; if she is ill I should be by her side.

Cath. No, stay, it is but a passing spell. [Henry hums song.] You are merry, my son.

Henry. As a bird in a bower, as a cat with cream, as a donkey with a bunch of thistles. [Laughs.] Ha, Marie, a fire in August?

Marie. The Queen-Mother ordered it.

Henry. Mordieu, mother, it is thoughtful of you. You know I am a Southerner, cradled in the sun, and how the north air chills my bones. I thank you, mother. [Bows low.] I must seek Margot, mother.

Cath. A minute, Harry. [To MARIE.] You may go, child.

Henry. No, stay, Marie.

Cath. Henry!

Henry. You take my wife from me, at least leave me her maid.

Cath. The King jests; go, child.

Henry. The King is in earnest, child, you may remain.

Marie. Am I to stay, Madame?

Henry. Why not?

Cath. As you will, why not?

Henry. Why am I so honoured to-night? why would you keep me?

Cath. Henry, if you would but trust me once.

Henry. I should never mistrust you again? I feel it, Madame.

Cath. [*Looks at him keenly; he still smiles.*] Are you and Margot happy? I am your mother now.

Henry. I have not complained. [*With double meaning.*] Has Margot?

Cath. No. But—

Henry. Madame, she is the sweetest woman in the world, and you—you—are her mother. [*Kisses CATHERINE'S hand, picks up parcel.*] Ah, for me; will you permit me, Madame?

Cath. Do not mind me, I am your mother now. [*Goes to fire.*]

Henry. [*Opens parcel, reads, "If heat be too much for you, this will revive you. RUGGIERI." Looks up suddenly, sees CATHERINE over fire, sprinkling powder. HENRY whistles air "The Huguenots must die." CATHERINE sees him looking at her; tears up paper, laughs.*]

Cath. Another letter enclosing a petition. Yours I trust was more pleasant?

Henry. [*Carelessly.*] From my falconer; he has a new bird for me to fly.

Cath. Well, good-night.

Henry. Must you go? You keep me here, and now you would leave me, mother.

Cath. Since you have nothing to tell me. [*Smiling.*] I am glad all is well.

Henry. Permit me to accompany you.

Cath. Nay, stay here, my maids wait without.

Henry. I'll walk with you to them.

[*The more CATHERINE tries to have him remain the more he insists.*

Cath. No, I forbid it; the world talks too much of you and my maids.

Henry. The world thinks me too fortunate.

Cath. The Queen might return.

Henry. Your Majesty forgets, she is not well.

[*CATHERINE begins to look nervously, smoke just begins to show. HENRY sees it and laughs.*

Henry, Stay with me, Madame, until Margot comes.

Cath. I would but—the King is coming to see you alone.

Henry. He will have the greater happiness of seeing his mother.

Cath. I must be gone.

Henry. [*Bowing in front of her.*] Not without me, Madame, I will not be so ungallant. See how a Gascon clings to a woman, even his wife's mother.

Cath. Quick then, Henry, show me the way then if you will.

[*HENRY bows her off, smoke thickens. MARIE gets up, puts hand to head, reels, falls in*

corner. Window at back opened. HENRY'S face appears; smoke clears, he enters, goes to door, admits CHARLES.

Charles. Do you always enter through the window, Henry?

Henry. Not in my own house, Sire.

Charles. [*Laughs.*] By the splendour of God, you Gascons are strange people. Did you walk along that cornice? A cat could scarce find room. It is dark, too.

Henry. A cat could not follow a chamois, a Gascon must. *Ventre St. Gris!* Marie, Marie! [*Lifts up her head.*]

Charles. She has fainted; ring for wine.

Henry. I have something here will revive her.

Charles. How close the room is. *Peste!* no wonder she found it too warm.

Marie. [*Looks round.*] Sire, I became dizzy; it must have been the heat.

Charles. Margot must be mad—a fire in August and a day like this!

Henry. Yes, Sire. [*Brushing hand on window-sill.*] Sire, the—the—heat has killed all the flies.

Charles. Tut, Harry, what joke is this?

Henry. None of mine, Sire, I never play with fire. Ask your mother, Sire, or better still, ask no one.

Charles. [*Significantly.*] Ah! [*To MARIE.*] You are better, Mademoiselle?

Marie. Thank you, Sire.

Charles. You may retire.

[*MARIE curtsies and exit.*]

Charles. [*Wanders about, picks up sword lying on table.*] This is a good blade, Harry. And you have a good wrist and a nerve that will not fail.

Henry. I fence indifferent well; for the rest, I never allow myself to be nervous.

Charles. Well said, Harry. Peste! You have my blood in your veins, and for all you're a damned Huguenot I like you, Harry.

Henry. And in spite of your blood and for all you're a damned Catholic, I like you, Charles.

Charles. Ha, ha, ha! the Guise is a good blade, but he's impetuous, Harry. He has never been taught to wait. Now St. Luc——

Henry. Your Majesty did n't honour me with your company to discuss swordsmanship.

Charles. No, the truth is, Harry, I'm worried about you. I don't think Margot treats you fairly.

Henry. Sire, you yourself have not been more gracious.

Charles. Tut, Harry, you cannot deceive me. I am the King, and I know. She was part of the treaty. You married her because she was a princess of France.

Henry. Had she been dowerless, I had asked no other wife.

Charles. Peste, man, be serious. These protestations are all very well for the crowd, but we can speak to each other plainly.

Henry. Do I not speak plainly, Sire? Look into my eyes. I swear that Margot is my wife, and that I have no other love.

Charles. God's death, he means it. You love her. Henry, on my soul, I'm sorry for you.

Henry. Sorry for me, Sire?

Charles. Yes, sorry for you. You're a good fellow, Henry, but you could hardly expect that Margot could love you.

Henry. Thank you, Sire, and why not?

Charles. She was forced into this marriage against her will, she has been cradled in the compliments of the court. You 're a soldier, a hunter, a man; now the Guise——

Henry. Damn the Guise! I tell you, she loves me.

Charles. She loves you? Don't be a fool, Harry.

Henry. She loves me, Sire, my life on it.

Charles. Peste, Harry, these maids of my mother's have turned your head. You 're too simple for the court.

Henry. I am, Sire, I 'm simple enough to trust my lady's word.

Charles. She told you she loved you?

Henry. Herself, Sire.

Charles. And I 've always believed Margot, although we 've the same mother. Henry, she is deceiving you. This very night the Guise is to visit her.

Henry. [*Hand on sword.*] It 's a lie, Sire.

Charles. Henry!

Henry. [*Kneeling.*] Your pardon, Sire. I forgot myself, she is my wife.

Charles. She is my sister, but if she forgets she is your wife, she shall not forget she is a Valois, and with the Guise. He has humbled me often, but to-night [*viciously*] I have him by the throat.

Henry. I can't believe it, Sire. Only to-day she told me she was all mine.

Charles. Do you stay here to-night?

Henry. [*Reluctantly.*] No.

Charles. Then come with me and we will prove it, Harry.

Henry. To-night? I can't to-night.

Charles. Why not?

Henry. I told her that I would not visit her to-night, that I would trust her.

Charles. Trust her! You're mad! [*Frantically.*] I tell you she's a Valois, her blood is cursed. Do I trust my brother or my mother? If you were not a Bourbon, should I trust you? Some day I'll open this vein [*showing arm*] and let my blood out drop by drop, I hate it so. [*Cunningly.*] You trust her, then why not come and prove that she is true?

Henry. You are mistaken, Sire, some one has lied to you.

Charles. No, no, my mother does not make mistakes; her spies serve her too well.

Henry. Catherine! [*HENRY pauses.*] It was she that put these suspicions in your brain. Now my soul tells me surely they are false. Sire, I'll come with you and prove that she is true.

Charles. And if the Guise be there——

Henry. [*Picking up sword.*] I'll kill him with this sword.

Charles. Good arm, good blade, I'll second you, cos. Kill him, kill him, stick him in the throat. Let the blood run. Ha, ha, it will be rare sport, Harry! [*Going off.*] If you fail, Harry, I'll kill him myself. [*Exit.*]

Henry. [*Goes to MARGOT's picture.*] There's love in your eyes and truth upon your lips, Margot, and I trust you.

Enter DE MOUHY.

De M. Are you alone, Sire?

Henry. Sire! Why, man, what's the matter? are the Catholics up?

De M. The Catholics up? I would they were,

Sire. Then we could fight and die with unstained honour as our brothers died at Jarnac.

Henry. Honour! Who calls our honour in question, De Mouhy?

De M. Sire, forgive me if I speak it, the words sting my tongue, but I must say them.

Henry. Come, man, out with them, don't make them worse by waiting.

De M. Sire, the Queen is deceiving you.

Henry. What! [*Laughs.*] You too, De Mouhy, you too, caught by this slander?

De M. Sire, you laugh, but it is true.

Henry. Ha, ha, ha, my poor De Mouhy, why don't you tell me that the Guise comes here to-night?

De M. You know, Sire?

Henry. Of course, and more. This is a trick of Catherine's, like half the scandal that stinks in the court. It's a lie, a trick. Confess one of her women slung this tale at you.

De M. [*Firmly.*] It is true, Sire, it is true.

Henry. God's death, you dare!

De M. Ay, with your sword against my heart, with death looking me in the face I say, it is true.

Henry. [*Pauses, looks in DE MOUHY'S eyes, drops his sword.*] True? For God's sake, don't say that, say it's a lie, say [*pulling himself together*] who told you, De Mouhy, one of Catherine's women, was it not?

De M. It was Marie Belleforet.

Henry. [*Relieved.*] Ha, ha, I knew it. Her mistress made her. Catherine frightened the girl and she lied to you.

De M. She loves me, Sire, she would n't lie to me.

Henry. And Marguerite loves me.

De M. She sent her riband to the Guise by Marie, and he visits her to-night.

Henry. To-night! and I thought she loved me, I thought that doubt was past. De Mouhy, De Mouhy, what shall I do?

De M. Kill him, Sire, kill him where he stands.

Henry. [*Picks up sword.*] I will, De Mouhy, I will with this sword. If Henry of Guise comes here to-night he will not leave to-night. Not all Lorraine shall save him. But Margot, Margot!

De M. She must die too, Sire.

Henry. No, it is my fault. Shall I blame her because I was a fool. She was mine, De Mouhy, mine in all her youth and purity, and I would not trust her, I let her mother throw her shadow on her, I humiliated her, I neglected her. I drove her into the Guise's arms.

De M. But your honour, Sire?

Henry. Honour! Did I think of her honour, when I let my vile suspicions light on her? It was I who was to blame, oh, De Mouhy, to have had such love and to have lost it; to have plucked such a rose with all its colour and perfume, but to fling it to another. Yet this very evening she said she loved me. [*Picks up his sword, buckles it on, takes hat as if going, puts down hat, thinks.*] De Mouhy, why did Catherine tell Charles to warn me against Margot? [*Comes back.*]

De M. What matters so you are warned, Sire? So that you know the worst?

Henry. If I kill the Guise what will Paris do?

De M. Rise up in arms and massacre the Huguenots. But your honour will be avenged.

Henry. My honour! My honour! So France must be drenched in blood and half her best sons

killed that my honour may be avenged. Paris must rise, Coligny, Condé, and all our friends be slaughtered in their beds because the Guise loves my wife. I've lived and laughed with peril for my country and my cause. My honour, my life, and Margot, what are all compared with France? It is because my poor countrymen died every hour of famine, fire, and the steel that I am here. Shall I desert them now? Oh, what a fool I've been.

De M. You have been true, it is she who has betrayed us.

Henry. Silence! I'll not believe it until my own eyes tell me so—but what a fool I've been. I came here lightly to measure my young brains with Catherine's. I thought a Gascon might pit his wits against the devil himself, and what a trap I'm in! [*Paces up and down, thinking.*]

De M. Trap!

Henry. Ay, a trap. There are two things alone that Catherine fears, the Guise and Henry of Navarre. If I kill the Guise the Catholics kill me, and both her foes are gone. The stars have lied and the Huguenots are lost. And I tried my wits against hers. Fool! Fool!

De M. Let me kill him, Sire.

Henry. That would not make the Catholics love me better. [*Walks up and down thinking, suddenly stops.*] *De Mouhy*, get me my mask.

De M. Your mask, Sire?

Henry. My mask. [*He goes to window.*] And, *De Mouhy*, it's not every one who can climb like a cat or a Gascon. Get me a ladder of rope. *La Roche-foucauld* has one.

De M. Where shall I meet you, Sire?

Henry. At my rooms and within the half hour. I 'll not take a sword, I 'll not trust myself. Come, De Mouhy, my wife will be here, and I would not meet her now. Come De Mouhy. [*Laughs.*]

De M. You laugh, Sire?

Henry. Ay, as you will do, De Mouhy, when you see the King to-night.

Enter MARIE.

Henry. Your mistress, my wife, is she well?

Marie. Why, Sire, yes, she was never better. I never saw her look so beautiful.

Henry. [*To DE MOUHY.*] Then Catherine lied to me. She never looked so beautiful, Marie?

Marie. Never, Sire, love is worth all René Bianchi's powders.

Henry. [*Brushing sleeve against MARIE's cheek; laughs, then brushes powder from the same.*] Yet you still use them, Marie. [*Turning.*] But you are right, love is a great beautifier. [*Half to himself, going.*] Love for whom? For me or for—come, De Mouhy. [*Exit.*]

De M. [*Turns back, whispers hurriedly.*] On no account admit the Guise to-night.

Marie. What will you give me?

De M. [*Picks her up and kisses her.*] That.

[*MARGOT enters, sees it all, laughs, turns her back to DE MOUHY, who shuffles, their faces meet, she laughs and turns away. DE MOUHY suddenly darts to the door and exits.*]

Mar. Oh, Marie, Marie, I don't think Calvin himself would be safe with you.

Marie. Indeed he would, Madame, he preaches too much. I want a husband who won't talk.

Mar. A husband?—is it so serious, child? Well, I wish you joy. I'm so happy I could wish the whole world in love to-night; even my mother could n't vex me when she kept me in her apartment as if I were a child. Oh, where is my riband, Marie?

Marie. Your riband?

Mar. Yes, I told you to get it back.

Marie. I have n't got it.

Mar. What, he would n't part with it? You told him?

Marie. I told him nothing, Madame. The Duc had disappeared.

Mar. Disappeared? You must find him, Marie, seek him at once.

Marie. I saw M. de Besme.

Mar. Well?

Marie. He said that the Duc had given orders that he was on no account to be found before morning. His servants dare not disobey him.

Mar. Oh, Marie, he will come here, just when I thought all safe, and I was so happy.

Marie. And if the King of Navarre should come?

Mar. He won't, he has given me his word. But he may hear, and I want his trust, his faith, and if he should see the Guise I should never be able to convince him that I—that I—love him.

Marie. You love your husband, Madame? Oh, if I had but known. I thought you hated this marriage. I thought—but the Guise must not come. I'll go at once, I'll meet him at the door and turn him back.

[*Gentle knock at door, they look at each other.*]

Mar. [*Whispering.*] It is he. [*Knock repeated softly.*] Go to the door [*still whispering*] and say I 'm not here, Marie, say [*half laughing*—say I 'm with my husband.

[MARIE goes to door, voices, then angrily the GUISE.]

Guise. Stand aside, girl. I am the Guise. [*Enters.*]

[MARGOT shrinks up in corner, GUISE looks round.]

Guise. Margot!

[MARGOT, terror-stricken, says nothing, MARIE has re-entered.]

Guise. You may go, girl.

Mar. No, no, don't leave me, for God's sake don't leave me.

Guise. Margot, what does this mean?

Mar. M. le Guise, as you are a gentleman, I ask you to go at once.

Guise. Is this your riband, Madame?

Mar. Yes, but——

Guise. Did you not send it to me?

Mar. I did but I was wrong; I loved my husband, he angered me, and in a fit of jealousy I turned to you to punish him. I was mad, but the moment you were gone I recovered myself. I sent to get my token back, but it was too late. I beg you as you are a gentleman to leave this room at once.

Guise. And you think the Guise is to be made a plaything to rouse the envy of the Bearnais? I came here by your invitation, Madame, and I do not go until I am satisfied. Margot, can't you see I love you? It's a fire that burns me up. Can't you see it in my eyes? Don't you hear it in my voice? Margot, I shake from head to foot. I'm faint from love of you. Margot, you've brought me inside the gates

of paradise, not all the angels shall turn me out again. [*Has gradually advanced, seizes her.*] Margot!

Mar. [*Breaking away.*] Oh, you beast, if I were a man I would kill you where you stand.

Guise. And I love you for it, I love you for your spirit, even for your hate. It's something for the Guise to fight, to conquer, Margot, and I mean to conquer to-night.

Mar. [*Quickly.*] Stand back or I'll scream.

Guise. The walls are thick; your mother built them, Margot, and were your screams heard, who dare thwart the Guise?

Mar. My husband fears you not.

Guise. The Bearnais! Margot! [*Steps towards her.*]

Mar. Henry! Henry!

Guise. [*Stops.*] You love him! Will you love him when he's dead!

Mar. Dead! What do you mean?

Guise. Why did Charles give the fairest flower in his realm, his Marguerite, to a Huguenot, to a heretic? [*Significantly.*] He only loves a Huguenot when he's dead.

Mar. Do you mean my marriage——

Guise. I mean that it was not meant that you should love Navarre, nor he love you, nor shall you until I have had my will.

[*He seizes MARGOT, she struggles, calls "Henry!"*]

Tap, tap, tap on window at back, HENRY'S face in mask at window, MARGOT sees face, screams, GUISE falls back, draws sword, HENRY jumps lightly into room. He is masked and unrecognisable.

Henry. Put up your sword, M. le Duc. I am a friend; see, I am unarmed.

Guise. What do you here?

Henry. I come to warn you.

Guise. Of what, Monsieur?

Henry. Of the King. He knows of your coming. He plans to surprise you here to-night, any moment may bring him.

Mar. My brother? Then my husband will know. Oh, God, what shall I do?

Guise. Let him come, I do not fear to meet him.

Henry. The Guise's courage is well known, but has Monsieur no consideration for his lady?

Guise. You are right, Madame, I go.

Henry. Not that way; the door is watched.

Guise. Watched!

Henry. Open it and you will hear the Guard.

[*GUISE opens door, voices heard off, laugh, silence, a voice, "Gentlemen, the King."*
Door shuts.

Mar. Bolt it, Marie. What shall we do, what shall we do?

Henry. If your Highness will trust me——

Guise. Take off your mask and let me see your face.

Henry. I cannot. [*Noise outside door.*]

Marie. They are coming.

Mar. Oh, go, Monsieur, for God's sake go.

Guise. Come on, fellow, show me the way.

[*HENRY goes to the window, GUISE follows and looks out, starts back.*

Guise. My God, it's as black as night and as bottomless.

Henry. The ladder is strong.

Guise. I will not go, this is some trick. I'll not risk my life on a frail rope.

Henry. I walked that cornice in the dark to bring it to you.

Guise. I am no mountebank to climb a houseside.

[*Beating on the door outside, voice, "Open, open."*]

Mar. 'Speak to them, Marie.

Marie. Who 's there?

Charles. The King.

Marie. The King!

Mar. Charles!

Guise. The King! [*Looks at window, starts back.*]

Henry. What, is the Guise afraid?

Guise. No, damn you. [*Takes off ring.*] But for the service you have done me I give you this ring. I will redeem it with whatever you demand. For the word you said then, if ever we meet again, I will kill you with this hand. Come. [*Gets outside window.*]

[*Noise at door. "Open, open," blows, etc.*]

Mar. [*At window.*] Quick, quick, follow him, whoever you are, and my gratitude go with you.

Henry. [*Has loosened the ladder.*] Mordieu, the ladder, I have dropped it.

Mar. And they will find you. Oh, I shall be ruined after all. No, no, they must n't. Quick, this way, hide, hide!

Henry. [*Laughs.*] But——

Mar. [*Pushes him into cabinet.*] There.

[*MARGOT dives into room, tearing off dress as she goes, re-appears in dressing-gown; MARIE opens door, enter CHARLES, TAVANNES, DE RETZ, etc.*]

Charles. By the splendour of Heaven, you keep me waiting, Margot.

Mar. I had to arrange my attire, it is late, Sire.

Charles. Are you alone, Margot? [*Looking keenly around.*]

Mar. I have my maid, Sire.

Charles. I hoped to bring you a husband, Margot, but he had other game to hunt. He 's an indulgent husband, is he not dear Margot?

Mar. I don't understand you, Sire.

Charles. Then I 'll speak plainly. Do you forget that I 'm the King and that you are my sister? Do you think I am blind and that you may ruffle it like any Paris troll? [*Sternly.*] You have a lover here.

Mar. No Sire, upon my soul, I have not.

Charles. Do you deny that the Duc de Guise is hidden in your room?

Mar. [*Firmly.*] Yes, Sire.

Charles. You swear it?

Mar. Yes, by St. Genevieve!

Charles. You lie. A man was seen to enter here. I know it was the Guise. Search high and low. By the splendour of God, he shall not escape me.

[*TAVANNES and others search.*]

Mar. Search, Sire, search, you'll not find him here.

Charles. The other room, Tavannes; put your sword through every cranny; if it draws blood so much the better.

Mar. It is useless, Sire, I say the Guise is not here.

Charles. And I say that he is. By the splendour of God, I 'll pull the palace down, but I 'll find him.

Mar. This is an outrage, Sire. I 'll not endure it. Permit me to retire.

Tav. [*Re-entering.*] The room is empty, Sire.

[*MARGOT gives an involuntary glance at cabinet.*]

Charles. Ah, think you I forgot the secret of your cabinet? [*Opens it, sees Henry still masked.*] Ah, Madame Margot, have I caught you now?

[*MARGOT half swoons against MARIE.*]

Now, sir, who are you, what do you here?

Henry. Mordieu, Sire, where should a man be but in his wife's rooms? [*Removes mask.*]

Charles. Henry!

Mar. [*Faintly.*] Henry! [*Drops her face in her hands.*]

All. Navarre!

Henry. [*Laughs.*] I told you, Sire, that you were mistaken.

[CURTAIN.]

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—CHARLES THE IX.'s *private room, hung with tapestries depicting hunting, implements of the chase everywhere.* CHARLES, DE BESME, CATHERINE, TAVANNES, ANJOU, *etc.* ÉTIENNE LEROY *discovered singing, "As pants the hart for cooling streams."*

Charles. Thank you, my Étienne, thank you. [ÉTIENNE bows and retires.] [Repeats.] "As pants the hart for cooling streams." No heart ever burned for water as I burn within.

Cath. You are not well, my son; I'll send for Ambroise Paré.

Charles. Nay, mother, it's my soul that's on fire. Oh, how I've tried to wear it out, to tire it until it dropped off to sleep. Mother, I may break and bruise this poor body, but until it is dust, my soul will burn within me day and night.

Tavannes. Your Majesty exhausts himself too much. These midnight chases through the silent forests until the horses drop and the dogs rebel, they fret you to a fever.

Charles. Tavannes, you don't know. Can I lie through the night and hear the voices muttering in my ear? Mother, think you that Cosmo Ruggieri speaks the truth?

Cath. Our path is planned before us, we can but tread it.

Charles. Two years, two years, and I dare not die.

Cath. Son, you shall have sleep. There is but one way to still these midnight mutterings, to cheer your troubled mind.

Charles. A way to sleep? Oh, I would walk through hell and never flinch were I sure of rest at last. Who can bring me rest?

Cath. Yourself, Sire, you can find it yourself.

Charles. Myself? I've tortured myself until I am one vast pain.

Cath. Be God's arm on earth, stamp out these heretics, purge France clear.

Charles. Drench France with blood, and have their shadows round me in the night? [*Shudders.*]

Anjou. It is they or you, brother, and since the Guise wounded Coligny they swear they'll have the Guise's blood or yours.

Charles. And so they shall. Am I not King of Catholic and Huguenot alike? I've banished Guise the court, the bungler. If he returns the Huguenots shall have his blood. Why did n't he kill the Admiral outright? Why did he wound him and leave him to plead for justice?

Tav. If you would but give the word, all is prepared, not one of them would trouble you again.

Charles. Not one of them—I'll not have Harry touched; I like the Bearnais and he likes me.

Enter PAGE.

Page. King Henry of Navarre.

Enter HENRY.

Charles. Ah, Harry, we were just talking of you.

Henry. I felt my ears burn, but I thought it was because I was a heretic.

Charles. A grim jest, but nay, I'll not burn you,

Harry; but why don't you leave your chill-blooded comrades and join the church of your fathers?

Henry. Mordieu, because I like my mother's better.

Charles. She was a brave woman, Harry.

Henry. [*Reverently.*] There was no better in the world, Sire.

Charles. But a mass, Harry, might win you—who knows—a kingdom.

Cath. [*To TAVANNES.*] The King is restless to-night, and may consent. Henry will spoil all. I must get him home.

Tav. A word from the Princess Marguerite would do it.

Cath. Good; he shall have word. [*Exit.*]

Charles. You come as you should, when you are wanted, Harry. Tavannes and Anjou talk ever of the State, and my mother of my soul.

Henry. But they each propose the same remedy, as Ambroise Paré for your body, a little blood-letting, eh, Sire? [*All start.*]

Charles. Your wits are keen since you came to court, Harry. You'll spend the night with me; you're cheerful and I want merry company to-night.

Henry. I should be dull to-night. Coligny lies badly wounded and as no one has been punished——

Charles. The Guise is banished under pain of death, let us forget him. See, I'm writing a little poem to my Ronsard. Tavannes has no ear for verse and no soul for poetry. This is a good thought, Harry. [*Reads:*]

“Your words can give immortal breath,
Eternal life, where I give death.”

[*Repeats:*]

“Where I give death.” [*Shudders.*]

Henry. Does n't your Majesty give life when he withholds the sword in other hands?

Charles. Life! Death! We know not what they mean. [*Pause.*] Let's go and shoe my horse, Harry.

Enter PAGE, bows to CHARLES. Shows letter.

Page. For the King of Navarre.

Charles. Give it him.

Enter CATHERINE, watches anxiously HENRY and letter. HENRY takes letter, reads it, turns it over.

Charles. [*To PAGE.*] Who gave it you, sir?

Page. [*Looks anxiously at CATHERINE, who puts finger to her lips.*] A lady, Sire.

Charles. A lady, Harry! I must tell Margot; I'm her brother, Harry.

Henry. You are her brother; the thought comforts me.

Charles. Come, Harry.

Henry. Pardon, Sire, I cannot stay to-night.

Charles. By the splendour of heaven, are we to be neglected for your light o' loves?

Henry. Ventre St. Gris! Light o' loves! [*Controls himself.*] Will you read the letter, Sire?

Charles. [*Reads.*] "Come at once, I want you. Margot." [*Looks at it.*] But this writing is not— [*Looks at CATHERINE who places her finger on her lips; he checks himself.*] You will stay with me to-night, Harry?

Henry. When a woman calls and she the most beautiful in France, when a queen commands and she of your blood, Sire——

Charles. I ask you for your good.

Henry. Sire, she is my wife.

Cath. Henry is right not to neglect his wife. He must go.

Henry. Mordieu, Madame, you half persuade me to stay.

Charles. I ask you to stay.

Henry. I implore you, Sire, to give me permission to go.

Charles. Once more I ask you, Harry; you would be better here, but if you insist——

Henry. I must insist, Sire; for good or ill, I go where Margot is.

Charles. Go then, go, but for God's sake go quickly.

Henry. Thank you, Sire. [*Bows, exit.*]

Charles. It is fate. If he had loved me better he would have stayed, he would have been saved. [*Looks at CATHERINE.*] Mother, Margot never wrote that letter.

Cath. He had to go; it must be all or none.

Enter PAGE.

Page. Monsieur le Duc de Guise.

Charles. The Guise! The Guise! [*Enter GUISE.*] God's eyes, M. le Duc, you 're a bold man to venture here now; are you not banished?

Guise. Ay, I am a bold man, but bold men are what your Majesty needs now. Did I not promise you that danger would find me by your side?

Charles. The danger is yours; do you set your life at so little worth?

Guise. I value it only when I can serve you, Sire. The Huguenots are arming, they have sworn to avenge Coligny, even on the King himself.

Charles. They shall have vengeance. I will give you up. God's death, could you not wait?

Guise. For nine years I have waited, Sire; a man may wait too long.

Charles. Do you flout me, M. le Duc? Arrest him, Tavannes. I'll show that I am King. I'll give them justice and they'll disarm.

Guise. They will disarm? Not unless you give up your mother and your brother too.

Charles. My mother and my brother?—what have the Huguenots against them?

Tav. Does not your Majesty know that the arquebus that wounded Coligny has been recognised as belonging to the Duc d'Anjou?

Charles. You, brother! Mort de tous les diables! This is too much! And you, mother, you too, were privy to this? Do you think you can force me against my will? God's life, I'll show you all who reigns in France, I'll——

Cath. Be calm, my son, it is too late to withdraw. It is sink or swim, the Huguenots or us.

Charles. If I were sure—there is no chance of failure?

Guise. The net is complete.

Charles. And I can save Henry, he can recant.

Anjou. I have the Swiss Guard, and my gentlemen.

Guise. Marcel the Provost will lead the citizens, and Cosseins guards Coligny, Cosseins who hates him. For nine years I have waited, and now at last! [*Fingering dagger.*] At last!

Cath. Every Catholic has a white band on his arm, a white cross on his cap; the rest must die. It is with you, Sire. Does the great bell ring from the Palace of Justice to-night?

Guise. Does the cannon fire from the tower of the Tournelles?

Charles. I 'll not have Harry injured.

Tav. Sire, he must die; better the head of one salmon, than a thousand frogs.

Charles. Not if he recant. Harry 's no bigot; he shall recant.

Cath. My son it is he who menaces our house. It is he whose star cuts short your life. He is the great foe of all.

Charles. None will escape to trouble me hereafter?

Guise. The boats are drawn up on the river bank, the ferry is removed, we have the keys of all the city gates.

Charles. I like Harry.

Tav. He deceives you, Sire, he laughs at your hunting, because you hunt on horseback as a King.

Charles. What! By the splendour of heaven, I 'll hunt the boar with him on horse or foot, with spear or but a knife.

Cath. He says that Ronsard writes your poems for you.

Charles. God's eyes, this is too much—but you all hate him—I don't trust you, mother.

Cath. He plots with Margot to deceive you. The other night you went to her rooms, who was there?

Charles. The King of Navarre.

Guise. What! Chardieu! [*Draws sword involuntarily.*]

Charles. And why not, M. le Duc?

Guise. Why not, indeed? But the court says he knows her maid's chambers better than the Queen's.

Cath. That night I stood and watched the shining window. Suddenly a form loomed up against the light; it opened the window and entered. I waited, almost immediately it came out again. I sent my

guards; they found a rope ladder in the court below, the man had vanished.

Guise. You know his name?

Cath. [*Pause, looks at Guise.*] The night was dark, I could n't see his face.

Charles. But you know it, Madame?

Cath. [*Looking at Guise.*] I have forgotten it—there is so much to do.

Charles. But Henry knew, he knew and laughed at me. S'death, he shall pay for it. Fool, I would have saved him and he laughs at me. Go, Guise, go, kill the Admiral, if you like, but kill all the Huguenots with him, all, all, all, so that not one be left to reproach me hereafter. See to it at once, at once do you hear? Kill, Tavannes, kill; ha, ha, ha, blood-letting is as good in August as in June. Kill! Kill! Kill! Kill!

[*Exit.*]

Guise. At last, at last! Let the bell ring from the Palace of Justice, let the great cannon fire!

[*General movement.*]

[CURTAIN.]

ACT IV.

SCENE II.—*Same as Act III.* MARGUERITE and MARIE discovered. MARGOT walks about, goes to window, seems uneasy and restless. Large cross on wall.

Marie. What is it, Madame?

Mar. I don't know, Marie. I feel that something is going to happen. [*Looks out.*] How quiet the town is, like a city of the dead. There's a rustle in the air like the wind in far-off woods, like the sound of a distant sea, a sound one only feels. [*Shrinks,*

starts back into the room, and crosses herself.]

Marie. What is it, Madame?

Mar. [*Hands to face.*] It was a bat; it is an evil thing, an omen, it spells misfortune.

Marie. Fear not, Madame, it has flown away as quickly as it came.

Mar. But it has left a shiver here. [*Presses heart.*] There is something strange on foot; when I left my mother's apartments to-night my sister Claude clung to me and begged me not to go.

Marie. Oh, Madame, why did you come then?

Mar. Because if anything happens I want to be near my husband. Where is De Mouhy?

Marie. He has gone to his lodgings by the side of the Belle Étoile.

Mar. And my hus—the King of Navarre?

Marie. He is with King Charles.

Mar. Good. I am glad he is safe with Charles. Oh, why did I not have patience, why did I send that riband, why did I listen even for a moment to the Guise!

Marie. Because your husband neglected you, because he treated you shamefully.

Mar. He saw the Guise here; he 'll never believe me again.

Enter HENRY.

Henry. It is late. I came as soon as the King would allow me. You wish to see me?

Mar. For two days I have hoped that every foot-fall might be yours, for two whole days, and yet I dared not send for you.

Henry. Dared not!

Mar. You saw me with the Guise. Sire, I am innocent. It is true I loathed this marriage. I had

not seen you since I was a child. They told me you were rough and light of love, but when I met you, and you spoke to me of my picture, there was truth in your eyes and reverence in your voice. Then you changed again, and I longed to punish you. I sent a token to the Guise—ere it was gone my repentance had begun. I tried to get it back, it was too late. He came to my rooms that night and I repulsed him. He lost his head; in my terror I called on you.

Henry. And thank God I heard you! I shall hear that cry with joy until I die. It is not you who were to blame, it is I. See, love, I ask your pardon.
[Kneels and bows his head.]

Mar. You!

Henry. Yes, for I loved you and loving you I doubted you. Love should know no doubts. But I was not wholly to blame. I would have placed my life, my honour in those little hands, but my comrades—I had no right to risk their lives.

Mar. I do not understand.

Henry. Do you not know why the King gave me his sister for a bride?

Mar. To prevent brother from killing brother, to bring peace to France.

Henry. To bring peace indeed, the peace that comes with death.

Mar. Death!

Henry. Yes, this marriage was to bring the Huguenots together that he might massacre them.

Mar. Massacre! No, no. And I was the lure, the bait to trap you with. Oh, Henry, you knew this, and yet you could love me!

Henry. Yes, for I looked into your eyes and saw

the truth. I knew that you were innocent. When did you first love me, Margot?

Mar. The day your eyes shone on me from the crowd. When did you first love me?

Henry. Before I saw you, Margot.

Mar. You must not jest with love, Harry.

Henry. Nay, I saw your picture, sweetheart. Your shadow was dearer to me than the self of other women. I loved you more when I looked into your eyes, and when I heard your voice—sweetheart, we have plucked Love's thorns, when shall we gather his roses?

Mar. I am yours, Harry. You may command me as you will. Take me, Harry, where we shall be safe, take me to Nérac.

Henry. You will go with me to Nérac?

Mar. You shall never leave me again.

Henry. I may stay to-night?

Mar. To-night, and all the nights while we have days.

Henry. [*Steps towards her trembling with delight.*] Margot! [*They are just about to embrace when out of the stillness the great bell strikes one, loudly and solemnly. They pause and listen. Bell booms again.*]

Mar. What 's that?

Henry. Nothing. A bell—what matter to us? To-night I have found my heaven. Come, Margot. [*Holds out his arms.*]

Mar. [*About to fall into his arms.*] Harry! [*Big bell rings out again, other bells join in. MARGOT starts.*]

Henry. What does this mean? [*Goes to window.*] The streets, that were so silent, swarm like a rifled hive. Mordieu, how they hum!

Mar. Something dreadful is on foot. Ah, that is why Claude tried to keep me close to her.

Henry. Claude tried to keep you? Charles tried to keep me.

Mar. Then why did you leave him? Oh, go back at once.

Henry. Because you wrote me. I would not have stopped for a thousand kings.

Mar. I did not write you.

Henry. But I have your letter here. [*Places his hand over his heart.*] It is the first time you have ever written me.

Mar. [*Frightened.*] Give it me. Let me see it—quickly—at once.

Henry. Here it is.

Mar. This is not my hand, it is my mother's.

Henry. Your mother's? Now I remember, Charles would have told me, and she stopped him.

[*The noise in the street meantime has grown steadily louder. Shots are heard, then a woman's scream, and the voice of the mob can now be distinctly heard singing. MARGOT screams at shots.*]

Henry. [*Restraining her.*] Listen.

[*From the distance comes clearly the voice of the mob singing:*

“Every street shall be a grave,
A corpse shall float on every wave,
The Huguenots shall die.”]

Henry. My God, it has come at last.

Mar. What has come?

Henry. The massacre. The mob is up; it has drunk blood, there are not Huguenots enough in

France to slake its thirst. Quick, my sword, my hat, I must be gone.

Mar. What will you do, where will you go?

Henry. To join my comrades, to share their fate, if need be to die with them.

Mar. No, no, you must not die. [*Clings to him.*] I cannot lose you now. Look at me, Harry; I love you, I am yours. You will not leave me to-night. Stay with me, Harry, you will stay!

Henry. God, if I but could! How beautiful you are! [*As if yielding to her. Suddenly pulls himself together.*] No, I will not shun danger to-night, that you may despise me to-morrow. Quick, Margot, be brave, and buckle on my sword. It was the man in me that won you, I will play the man to-night.

Mar. [*Buckling on his sword and crying.*] You are right, Harry, I would rather lose you than lose my love for you.

Henry. That's my brave Margot. [*Going to door without hat.*]

Mar. Your hat, Henry. One last look into your face! Oh, how I love you, Harry, and it is my love that has brought you to your death!

Henry. No, Margot, no; kiss me love, and so farewell, farewell.

[*HENRY exit; she throws herself on her knees and prays, if possible on a prie-dieu.*]

Mar. Mother of Heaven who suffered so on earth plead for me now. Let me not suffer more than I can bear. Let me not be the instrument of his death. Mother of God listen to my prayer, and give me back my love or let me die.

[*Noise increases outside, MARIE rushes on.*]

Marie. Madame, Madame, they are fighting in the courtyard. [*Going to window, draws back, covering her eyes.*] Oh, I can't look, it is too horrible.

Mar. [*Goes to window and looks out.*] It is Soubese; oh, the cowards, ten to one, they in steel corselets and he in a simple tunic. Look, look, there is one who escapes them. It is De Mouhy. Brave, brave De Mouhy, see he wards them off. Good heart, good arm, he will fight his way through yet. [*Yells heard through window. MARGOT shrieks through window.*] This way, De Mouhy! Dear God, he's down! [*MARIE has joined her at window; they both look out, and in the distance comes the sound of HENRY'S voice: "Navarre, Navarre!" MARGOT excitedly waves her handkerchief.*] Look, Marie, it is the King, it is my husband, he will save him. Navarre, Navarre! Fight on De Mouhy, the King is coming. Ah, they draw back afraid, he has reached them. Side by side they gain the palace doors, they enter. Heaven be praised! O Holy Mary may I not forget! Brave bullies, you hesitate and dare not follow. Murder has not made its way into the palace. [*Waves frantically.*] Navarre, Navarre! [*Rushes to door, throws it wide open, enter HENRY supporting DE MOUHY. He places him in chair, MARIE runs to him.*]

Henry. Bolt the door, Margot. Quick, Marie, some wine, quick, he is fainting.

De M. [*Drinks.*] Oh.

Henry. Can you speak?

De M. Save yourself, Sire, save yourself, the Catholics are up.

Henry. Then I must join Coligny.

De M. Coligny is dead.

Henry. Dead!

Marie. Oh, Sire, they are firing from the palace windows; see, it is the King himself.

Mar. My brother! [*Covers her face with her hands and shudders.*]

De M. La Rochefoucauld is slain, Soubese, Pardailleu, and Pilus lie dead below. The Catholics, white band on arm, and white cross on hat, are murdering men and women. By morn there will not be a Huguenot alive.

Mar. White band on arm, white cross on hat. [*Moves to work-basket, busy with hat.*]

De M. The children are not spared. [*Howl outside.*] Listen.

Henry. Come, De Mouhy.

Mar. No, no, Harry.

De M. Sire, you must not go, you are our last hope. If you die, the Faith dies too.

Henry. You are sure Coligny is slain?

De M. I saw them butcher him.

Henry. [*With sudden fury.*] Them! Who?

De M. The Guise, Anjou and his Swiss Guard, I caught their colours white, black, and green.

Henry. The Guise, Anjou!

De M. It was De Besme who did the deed.

Henry. De Besme, De Besme, you are right, I must not die yet.

De M. De Besme and Scarlabous, they threw him from the window right at the Guise's feet, and the mob licked their chops and snarled just like hungry wolves. He kicked the body and I heard him cry "We have killed the lion, now for the young cub, now for Navarre!" Dazed, sick at heart, half fighting, half praying, I knew that I must save you, you are our last hope.

Sire, I have warned you and I die. [*Falls, half fainting.*]

Henry. [*Supporting him.*] Marie, you must see to him. [*Noise in corridor: "Guise, Guise! quick, they come."*] HENRY and MARIE help him off. While they are gone MARGOT pins cross on HENRY'S hat.]

Henry. [*Returns, puts on his hat, draws sword, then kisses MARGOT solemnly.*] Good-bye Margot.

Mar. [*Feverishly.*] No, no, you must not go yet. [*As she speaks to him she is tying the handkerchief on his arm.*]

Henry. You think I will stay to be butchered before your eyes?

Mar. But you must not go yet. I love you, I love you, Harry, stay with me to-night.

Re-enter MARIE.

Henry. If I but could! No, Margot, I'll die fighting.

Mar. Then fight them here, fight them, I have no fear. Open the door, Marie, and run, run to the King my brother. Tell him if he loves Margot, to come here at once.

[MARIE opens door and slips out, as enter DE GUISE, TAVANNES, DE BESME, etc.]

Henry. So you are come, De Guise, you and your brother butchers. Ha, ha, De Besme, of all the men in the world I wanted to see you. Look, the Admiral's blood is still bright on your arm. Come on, you killed an old man sleeping, but you are not done with the Bearnais.

Tav. This is no place for you, Princess; will you retire?

Mar. My place is by my husband's side.

Guise. If she will have it so be it. Down with him!

[*Several attack HENRY who repels them.*]

Tav. Stop!

Guise. You dare!

Tav. M. le Duc, the King must be obeyed. [*Points to scarf and cross.*] See, the young fox has fooled us after all. No wonder he speaks bravely; look De Besme, look at his arm. This is no place for soldiers with a turncoat.

Henry. Turncoat!

Tav. Ay, turncoat. You knew the King would spare you if you recanted.

[*HENRY looks wonderingly at his arm.*]

Tav. A kingdom is worth a mass, eh, Henry?

Henry. [*Realising.*] Ventre St. Gris! Who did this? [*Tears off scarf.*]

Mar. [*Clutching at him.*] No, no, Harry, wear it for my sake, wear it and my brother will save you.

Henry. No, Margot, no, not for you will I endure dishonour.

Guise. You do well. I swear if you donned the double cross of the Guise it should not spare you to-night.

Henry. Ah, you are brave with Paris armed behind you. You crawled from the window when last we met. Come, be a man and fight foot to foot. Fight me like a gentleman of France.

Guise. Think you I have forgotten? No man laughs at the Guise and lives. On him men!

All. À Guise! À Guise!

[*HENRY lunges out at DE BESME, who falls.*]

Henry. That for Coligny, M. de Besme! Who is next? Come on!

Enter KING CHARLES.

Charles. Hold!

All. The King!

Mar. Sire, Sire, you are my brother, you are my brother, mercy, mercy!

Charles. You here, Margot! Why are you not with our mother?

Mar. She sent me here to lure my husband to his ruin. But you will save him.

Charles. What, she would have sacrificed you, too, to those stale prophecies?

Mar. But you are my brother, you will not forget it.

Charles. No, by my soul! Come, Harry, come with us.

Guise. Why do you pause? Come, run the heretic through, I command it.

Charles. Command! God's death, you dare? Let a man stir his head. He shall pay for it.

Guise. Sire, you forget, it must be all or none—you said it. You have given us his life and by all the saints I'll have it.

Charles. What the King gives the King can take away.

Guise. Before the King's Guards come cut him down. À Guise! À Guise!

Guiseards. À Guise! À Guise!

Charles. [*Choking.*] God's eyes! [*Calling his Guard.*] Nancay, Nancay! Am I not King of France?

Guise. Ay, King of France, but the Guise rules in Paris. [*Roars and yells outside.*] Do you hear, Sire? Dare you ask that mob to stay its hand? You have sent those hundred mouths gaping for blood, dare you thwart them of their prey?

Charles. My God, what I have done! What monster have I raised?

Guise. The Guise rules to-night. I have sworn an oath and the Guise keeps his word.

Henry. Then keep it now.

Guise. I will; down with him men!

Henry. Stop! Do you know this ring?

Guise. It is mine; I parted with it some two days gone.

Henry. If the Guise keeps his word, let him keep it now. You promised me what I should ask of you.

Guise. Mon Dieu! It was a trap. You would ask for your life.

Henry. My life! I could not take it at the Guise's hand, stained with Coligny's blood. No, you promised to meet me face to face when I said you were afraid. Shall I say it again?

Guise. Pardieu! No, no, stand back men, the Guise keeps his word.

[*They engage, HENRY disarms Guise, sword at throat.*]

Henry. Now Coligny you are avenged!

Charles. Stop!

Henry. Sire!

Charles. Let him go, Harry!

Henry. Sire, you are the King. He is your enemy as well as mine.

Charles. I do not fear him. [*Voice of mob, points out.*] I have done that will kill my sleep for ever. Nothing can fear me now. But I would save you; let him go.

Henry. Go, your King has saved you.

Guise. Perhaps he has saved himself. I hate you for this, Henry of Navarre, but the Guise will not prove ungrateful. [*Bows, exit.*]

Henry. [*At CHARLES's feet.*] Sire, Sire, how can I thank you?

Charles. By holding to the life that I have given you, by keeping that upstart Lorraine from too much power. [*Roar outside: "À Guise, À Guise!"*] You hear them! But, Harry, he will never reign. My time is short and I see many things. I thought you but an idler who only woke to a chase or a fête. I was wrong, you will be King. You will bring peace where I have brought a sword. Good-night Margot. [*Kisses her tenderly.*] Nancay, place your trusted guards before the door. See not a soul enters, not the Queen-Mother herself. Good-night, Harry.

[HENRY kneels and kisses King's hands, CHARLES turns and exits with his attendants, leaving HENRY and MARGOT alone.]

Henry. Margot we are alone.

Mar. For the first time since the church made us one we are alone.

Henry. Alone indeed; I have lost friends and freedom, all save you.

Mar. Save me and hope.

[*During speech MARIE and DE MOUHY appear at back. RUGGIERI appears from cabinet, points out of window.*]

Rug. Sire, a star is shining brightly. It first shone at your birth, but never so brightly as now. Your perils are past. Sire, you will be King.

Mar. [*Tenderly.*] My King!

Henry. My Queen! My Queen of Marguerites!

[*They embrace, curtain slowly falls.*]

[CURTAIN.]

Abel

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